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NATURAL HISTORY, SPORT, AND TRAVEL.

BY

EDWARD LOCKWOOD,

BENGAL CIVIL SERVICE, LATE MAGISTRATE OF MONGHYR.

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PREFACE.

On arrival in England after spending the best part of my life in the Bengal Civil Service, I was cautioned, on the risk of being voted a bore, never to mention India; and the proprietor of one of the leading journals, who for many years has taken great interest in literature connected with the east, on hearing that I proposed writing a book about India, warned me that I had no chance whatever in securing readers in England, unless I told my story briefly, and in the lightest possible style.

Believing this advice to be sound, I have followed it as far as possible here, particularly

as I shall be glad if I can attract the attention of those who have an India career before them to the study of natural history, a subject which at present appears insufficiently developed in the education of youth.

In illustration of this I may mention that during twenty years' service, although I constantly heard people regretting their ignorance of botany, with the exception of a short interview which I had two years ago with Dr. Watt, the Professor of Botany at the Hoogly College, I have never, in India, met an Englishman who could identify any but the most common trees and plants which grew around us, much less arrange them according to their affinities or natural orders. This has always been a source of wonder, considering the intense pleasure which even a desultory study of the fauna and flora of my district has always afforded me.

Some of the incidents which I have mentioned have previously appeared in the Calcutta "Englishman," and in "Land and Water," and the "Field," whose columns are read all

over India, and which have given a stimulus to the study of natural history more than any other previous publications.

The account which I have given of the Mahwa tree, corresponds with a paper which I read early in the year before the Linnean Society of London.

In his beautiful edition of "White's Selborne," Mr. Frank Buckland says: "There is hardly a parish in England or Wales where the clergyman has not opportunities of writing a local 'White's Selborne.'" The idea of writing the following pages was here suggested, for I thought that if a country clergyman has opportunities of writing anything interesting on the natural history of his parish, how much greater opportunities has the Indian District Officer, with thousands of square miles under him.

The last chapter, giving a short account of a tour made by myself and my wife in Palestine, is inserted in order to show how easily officers and others returning to England from India overland, can visit by far the most interesting

country in the world to all who profess the Christian faith.

I take this opportunity of thanking Mr. F. Smith, of the British Museum, for his kindness in identifying the insects in my collection, whose scientific names I was unacquainted with.

EDWARD LOCKWOOD.

Kingham, Chipping Norton,
June 5, 1878.

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NATURAL HISTORY,

SPORT, AND TRAVEL.

CHAPTER I.

The District of Monghyr in Bengal.—Separation of Species by the Ganges.—Population of the District.—Checks to Population.—The early History of Monghyr.—The bondmen Mushirs.—The Famine of 1873–74.—The "Black Pamphlet."—Difficulty in getting correct Information regarding the Condition of the People.—The Famine Durbar held by the Prince of Wales at Patna.—History of the Famine proposed by a native Gentleman.—Irrigation as a Preventive of Famine.—Emigration.—Timidity of the Natives.—Scene at the Kharakpoor Irrigation Works.—Apathy of the Natives led out to Execution.—Antiquities of Monghyr.—Search for reported buried Treasure.

The district of Monghyr, which consists of some four thousand square miles, is divided into two nearly equal portions by the Ganges. The northern part is an extensive plain formed

by the rich alluvial soil, brought down by the ever changing river, whilst the southern portion consists of vast rice tracts, and forests which cover the metamorphic hills, extending far away into Central India from the town of Monghyr, three hundred miles north-west of Calcutta.

Lovers of natural history who visit Monghyr, find that this division of the district separates also in a very marked manner, the most conspicuous species of the animal and vegetable kingdoms; and the sportsman who to-day may find tigers, bears, baboons, tupaias, peacocks, jungle-fowl, and grey partridges, in the undulating country to the south, will look in vain for such things if to-morrow he crosses the river northward. The river separates also the most conspicuous trees and plants. In the forests of the south are found the ebony tree (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), the sál (*Shorea robusta*), the most useful of all Indian timber trees, and the Mahwa (*Bassia latifolia*) which supplies not only food to the lower classes, but also a hundred thousand gallons of spirit yearly to the drinking portion of the population.

The south also yields vast quantities of rice, and a hundred and fifty tons of opium, grown

on twenty-five thousand acres of land, whilst, after crossing the Ganges, little rice and not a single poppy will be seen.

In the north nine-tenths of the trees are cultivated mangoes, whilst wheat, Indian corn, various kinds of millet, peas, Masur (*Cicer lens*) Rahar (*Cytisus cajan*), oats, indigo, mustard, linseed, and castor-oil, are the principal crops which the land-holders find profitable to grow.

The northern portion of the district, also, during the cold weather, forms a vast feeding ground for swimming and wading birds. On some of the marshes a hundred thousand ducks may be seen, so close together that they almost hide the water; and as flock after flock pass overhead on being disturbed, the sound of their wings resembles waves breaking on a troubled shore.

The seasons in Monghyr correspond nearly with those of Bengal proper. The rains set in about the middle of June, and subside about the 20th of October, during which time the 40 or 50 inches of rain which fall, so completely saturate the rich alluvial soil of the low-lying country, that an abundant cold-weather crop of wheat, barley, peas, &c., is often reaped in

April, without a single shower falling on it from the day it appeared above the ground in the previous November.

The population of Monghyr, according to the last census, is nearly two millions, and considering that one-third of the district consists of sand, rock, forest, and other unculturable waste, each square mile under cultivation has to feed and clothe seven hundred human beings. This number, in the present state of agriculture in India, appears the utmost limit which the ground can support, and in the absence of other appreciable checks to population, want of food and pestilence carry off the superabundant mouths. The present teeming population is the result of British rule, which permits no sword to be drawn in anger in the district,—which hunts down murderers, tigers, wolves, bears, and poisonous snakes,—which abhors Sutti and infanticide,—which sends gangs of vaccinators over the district, distributes cholera pills to all police stations, and spends vast sums of money in distributing food to the hungry mouths which cannot feed themselves.

In the year 1780, my grandfather who held the same appointment which I held nearly a

hundred years later, was deputed by the Government to ascertain the early history of Monghyr, and the old people from whom he inquired, spoke of a time not long since passed away, when the surrounding country was a wild jungle without a vestige of cultivation, and inhabited only by hermits, who resided in the woods and on the rocks in the vicinity of the Ganges.

The first attempt to reclaim the jungle is said to have been made by one of these holy men, who calling in the aid of the god Bishkarna, the patron of artists, built a fort on the present site of Monghyr, and the place having acquired an odour of sanctity, not only hermits assembled from all parts of the country, but a pious agricultural population sprang up and the primeval woods resounded with the woodman's axe.

Clearing the jungle at that period, however, must have been very perilous work; for even now-a-days tigers not unfrequently carry off the wood-cutters, and the Maharaja Sir Jai-Mangal-Singh told me that when he was a boy, more than a thousand people were yearly killed by wild beasts on his estates alone. It would

indeed almost appear that the power given to Adam over the beasts of the field was reversed in India, and in an old Hindustani book which I have read, a woman alluding to her death says she hopes to get along somehow until a tiger catches her, as though being killed by a tiger was the ordinary cause of death.

The influx of Englishmen, however, soon lessened the ravages of wild beasts, and besides the legitimate hunting which goes on when there is any chance of sport, the Government offers so high a reward for the destruction of tigers and leopards, that a hundred skins have been brought to me by one party of hunters, who had been prowling about the country setting bows charged with poisoned arrows in every path frequented by wild beasts.

As the ancient checks to population in Monghyr,—war, murder, sutti, infanticide, wild beasts, small-pox, and famine,—are now combatted with more or less success by the Government, and as the improvident natives marry without a thought for the future, they would long ago have been trampled to death from over-crowding but for cholera, which, notwith-

standing the distribution of pills at the police stations, acts as one of the principal checks to keep the people within bounds. Indeed this mysterious disease appears to keep pace with the population, and rages when poverty causes a ready sale for bad grain, bad vegetables, and fish. Although it is principally a poor man's disease, it is by no means a respecter of persons, and its constant presence is one of the chief drawbacks to a residence in Monghyr.

So long as there are railroads in India famine, in its strictest sense, namely where food is not procurable for money, will probably never occur; but whilst the natives increase as they do at present, it is difficult to imagine how the millions of pauper children which are born are to be kept alive. Their tendency is to increase in geometrical ratio, whilst the food supply stands still. It has been calculated that the produce of a single pair, if unchecked, in a hundred generations would not only cover the whole world flattened out, but would form a solid column of human beings three thousand times the distance from the earth to the sun. The natural checks to population are, however,

so enormous that the present population of the earth could be stowed away within a cube, whose side measures a thousand yards; and there is difficulty in getting food for even this comparatively insignificant number.

The Mushirs, or Mousers, as they may be called, are found in every village of Monghyr, and are half-starved even in times of plenty. They seldom see coin, but receive their scanty wages in coarse grain, which they flavour with rats, mice, snails, and jungle roots, whilst living in hovels which an English pig would consider poor accommodation. One would imagine that such persons must find difficulty in getting wives, but the contrary is the case, for bachelors and spinsters are unknown. Directly they arrive at the age of puberty they present themselves at their landlord's house, and having signed a deed binding themselves to remain in bondage for the term of their natural lives, receive a few shillings in return, with which to entertain their friends at a marriage feast, and to set up house. As they can hardly support themselves in times of plenty, most of their children die from want when the times are hard.

The bonds to which the mushirs attach their marks — for none of them can write — are curious documents, to be found in every village, though they are very seldom seen by European eyes. The following is a translation of one which came into my possession during the recent famine.

Agreement between A. B., a mushir of village Mulleypore, pergunnah Purbutpara, zillah Monghyr, on the one hand, and Baboo C. D., Rajpoot, on the other. On consideration of receiving Rs. 5 in cash to celebrate his marriage, A. B. hereby binds himself to plough, sow, irrigate, and reap the fields of C. D., and perform faithfully all the duties of a kamiya or bondman. The said A. B. binds himself to continue in the service of his master, C. D., and never to refuse doing any work imposed on him; morning and evening, day and night, he will be present and ready to work, and he will never absent himself, even for a visit to a friend or relation, without leave. If on any occasion the said A. B. should absent himself, that day's work will be placed to his debit, and he will be liable for such damage as Her Majesty's courts of law may direct.

In addition to the above duties, the said A. B. binds himself to furnish the said C. D. with the following commodities as may be directed by a council of ten, peers of the said C. D.:—thatching grass, bamboos, string, wood, and other things (*waghaira*). This deed is executed in good faith, 22nd Assar 1265 (corresponding to A.D. 1857), and holds good at the present day.

(Sd.) A. B. (*his mark*).
,, C. D. *and witnesses.*

An old hag, who sat by the door of my tent mumbling over the hardness of the times, was pointed out to me as the person for whom A.B. had sold himself in bondage. Truly, I thought, steam the great civilizer has not done much for this man, although the railroad runs within twenty yards of his door.

District Officers* in Bengal should never cease to pray that the land may bring forth its fruit in due season, as failure of a single crop means that thousands within his jurisdiction will die of want if not fed by Government.

But the vast amount of extra work which failing crops create, although his hands may be already full, is not the chief cause for the District Officer's prayer. If he allows them to starve, as he did in Orissa, or feeds them, as he did in Behar, when the rice crop failed in 1873, he must not be surprised if he finds himself regarded by the public as an unprofitable ser-

* The District Officer, or Collector-Magistrate, is the principal executive officer in the large tract of country which constitutes a District in India. The Government looks to him for any information which it may require regarding the people under his charge.

vant, subject rather to impeachment than to praise.

When I arrived at Monghyr, early in 1873, I found that Famine was the official bugbear. District Officers pricked up their ears when the subject was mentioned, as men prick up their ears when a cry of "mad dog" is raised in the London streets. The Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Campbell, as President of the Committee appointed to inquire into the Orissa famine, knew what would be expected from him if the crops failed within his province, and he was not the man to allow a district to remain in the hands of any officer who lacked energy, or who might appear unequal to the extraordinary amount of labour which even approaching famine would call forth. Great was the excitement, therefore, in September, when the rice in Behar began to turn yellow from want of rain, and when from all quarters reports of impending famine came pouring in. Nor was the excitement allayed when an order arrived from England that no one was to starve, whatever the cost might be. Behar officials felt that the eyes of the world were turned towards them, and they vied with each

other in making their preparations for all emergencies, complete. At Monghyr the increase to official correspondence was enormous; the postman staggered along under the weight of it, and the telegraph wires were never at rest, either by day or night.

The principal subjects on which information was required were—

The crop prospects.

The resources of the people, and the amount of Government aid which might be required to keep them from starving.

Accurate information regarding the rice was easily obtained; the crop in nearly every village had failed, or was being fed off by cattle; and, as regards the future spring crop of wheat, barley, and peas, deficient rain had allowed the sun to bake the soil almost into the consistency of bricks, and much of the land throughout the district remained unsown.

But there was, and always will be in India, great difficulty in forming an accurate estimate regarding the condition of the people and their resources. Village after village was visited, and the inhabitants who crowded round had

only one story to tell, namely, that they had nothing; neither grain, nor money, nor credit; that they must starve unless fed by Government; and they pointed to their rack-rented land, to their children, most of whom were suffering from spleen, to a few filthy pigs, and to their empty rick-yards, as all the property which they possessed on earth. How far this startling statement was true it was impossible at the time to form a very accurate judgment, for experience had taught officials that a man with ten thousand silver coins buried in the ground would have little hesitation in assuming the garb of a mendicant and declaring himself utterly destitute, if he thought any benefit would accrue to himself by doing so.

One of the best tests for ascertaining the scarcity or otherwise of food grains was visiting the marshes which abound in some parts of Behar. The margins are fringed with sedges (*Cyperus palustris*), locally known as *Chicoras*. They may be called "famine thermometers," for in times of plenty they are abandoned to the pigs, but in times of scarcity the bulbs are grubbed up by the natives for food,

and when I saw five hundred persons chicora-hunting on a single marsh, I knew that there was famine in the land.

I retailed the information which I had gained to Lord Northbrook and Sir Richard Temple when they visited my district in November, and it was agreed that although the spring crops might be saved by unexpected rain, yet it would not be safe to delay for a single day the import of grain from Burmah.

The grain arrived, and with it abundant rain, which saved that part of the district where the spring crops grew, indeed, considering the high price of food, wheat-growers were enabled to realize what, to their humble ideas, were almost fortunes. Still, the rice-cultivators, whose crops had failed, had to be fed; and, although it subsequently turned out that many had clearly exaggerated their poverty, thousands who otherwise must have starved were kept alive by the Government bounty, and by the extensive public works which the Government undertook.

Those who were engaged during this season of scarcity in administering the Government

relief had unusual opportunities for seeing how much misery has to be endured by a population which has increased beyond the supply of food. Old men who for sixty or seventy years had managed somehow to keep body and soul together, appeared like living skeletons, clutching their pittance of rice in order to preserve their lives a few days longer. Mothers might be seen grovelling on the ground and beseeching for an extra handful of grain in the hope that by eating it they might afford nourishment to the emaciated infants at their breasts; and, saddest sight of all, skeleton troops of children might be seen, their beautiful gazelle-like eyes overflowing with tears of hunger as they received the Government bounty of rice in the rags which hung around them, but which barely covered their nakedness.

The order received from England, however, that no one was to starve, was carried out, and the "Times," summing up the famine, said, "The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal may take all credit to himself for hard work, faithfully done, and so may District and Famine officers, while to Lord Northbrook

will belong the high honour of commanding in one of the purest and noblest campaigns ever fought in India." The satisfaction which this high praise afforded us was enhanced by the receipt of an invitation to attend a "Famine Durbar," presided over by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, at Patna, on the 1st January 1876; for District officers thought that the zeal they had shown in carrying out the orders of Government that no one was to starve would be publicly commended. The result, however, proved the vanity of human wishes, for, on the morning of the Durbar, a certain anonymous "Black Pamphlet" was circulated among the Prince's suite, asserting that the so-called Famine was a myth, that the money spent in relief works had been wilfully squandered, and that, instead of receiving praise, the Famine officers should be condemned. This scurrilous pamphlet, which totally misrepresented facts, made such an impression at the time, and afterwards, until its misrepresentations were exposed, that the Famine officers who had been summoned to the Durbar returned unnoticed to their districts, sadder, if not wiser men.

The natives were loud in their thanks to the Government, and wherever I went they sang the praises of the Queen who had, so they declared, saved them from the jaws of a horrible death.

The Black Pamphlet kept back the praise which District officers hoped to get at the Famine Durbar, and they had to console themselves with the reflection that virtue brings its own reward. The native gentlemen, who had aided in the famine, however, had very little cause to complain, for honours were showered thick upon them. One of my native subordinates who was made a *Khan Bahadoor*, equivalent to C.B. in England, was so delighted with the honour conferred upon him that he at once set about writing an account of the famine, which according to the prospectus issued by him, was to commence with a history of his family and of mine; but the proof sheets sent for my inspection and approval, were rather startling, and would have delighted a disciple of Dr. Darwin; for the history of my family was headed in large capitals—"Geology of the House of Lockwood."

It is idle to talk of irrigation as a permanent

preventive of famine. All it can do in Monghyr is to increase a pauper population up to a certain limit by producing more food than is produced at present. The carcase of a lion can support more flies than the carcase of a dog; but irrigation cannot possibly increase food, as population increases, in geometrical ratio.

The Government has already through the Court of Wards, which manages the vast estates of the Maharaja of Darbhanga, made extensive irrigation works at Kharakpore, and it will be able to form a fair estimate how far irrigation on a grand scale is likely to succeed in Monghyr, and ward off famine. It very rarely happens, however, that water, other than what the clouds supply, is required for the principal rice crop, and as the holdings generally are very small, the tenants can sink wells, and irrigate their scanty crops from them, or from tanks which can be made without cost during leisure hours.

Emigration, which in England forms an efficient safety-valve for the surplus population, has very little effect in Monghyr, and those who do emigrate, being the hewers of wood

and drawers of water, are not the persons the country wishes to get rid of. They form the backbone of the country, and should be kept at home. The Brahmins, the middle-men, the fiddlers and drummers, the rich man's poor relations, and the hosts of similar non-productive labourers, have a proverb which they fully act up to, namely, that a seat of thorns in one's native country is better than Solomon's throne in a foreign land.

The Government does all it can to promote emigration, but the numbers to be dealt with are so enormous, and the people have such a deep-rooted antipathy to move, that very little relief has been afforded hitherto.

In March last I accompanied an emigration agent to the Monghyr jail, where a hundred able-bodied men were confined, failing to give security for their good conduct. As the plea of many was that they had no ostensible means of livelihood, merely because the times were hard, I thought this a favourable opportunity of giving them a chance of beginning life again in a new country; for the agent not only offered to stand surety for them, but to guarantee good wages, such as they had never heard of before.

Not a man would move; they all owned their lot was a hard one, that cholera had lately gone through the jail, but "better," they said, "to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of."

In every village which I visited during my cold weather tour, I invariably brought up the subject of emigration to the ill fed, badly clothed villagers who collected round my tents, but they appeared to regard it with horror. They excused themselves by saying that they were a timid race, a race of cowards, unable to buffet with the world when out of sight of their ancestral homes. I also tried to persuade the leading Zemindars or landholders to visit those countries where labour is required from Bengal, and, having seen with their own eyes the state of the labourers there, report on their return the real facts to their countrymen. The Zemindars were invariably highly amused at my proposition, but they declined acceding to it on two grounds—first, because they felt no inclination whatever to move; and, secondly, because the more thickly the country is populated the better for them, on account of labour being cheap. At present the crowded state of

the country and great competition for land is a very considerable cause of discontent. The aged ryots talk of a good old time when rents were low, when rice was cheap, and when cholera was less prevalent than at present. Unfortunately their memories are treacherous, and no mention is made of the leopards which watched over their villages, and the small-pox which carried them off by thousands.

The natives would emigrate fast enough if they knew and liked the persons under whom they may be called upon to serve in a foreign country. The Government should establish *khass-mehals* or farms under direct official management in Burmah or Assam, and appoint gentlemen who have the confidence of the people to manage them. If this were done I have little doubt that thousands who at present are too timid to move would at once leave their country for their country's good.

The Government could not, of course, provide work for the millions which could well be spared from India; but when once emigration comes into good odour a general tide of emigration would set in all over the country.

The timidity of the natives of Bengal may

be illustrated by an incident which occurred a few months ago.

The Irrigation works at Kharakpoor, some fifteen miles from Monghyr, were fast approaching completion, and the two sides of the embankment which dammed up the little river Mun were gradually getting nearer and nearer each other, until at last the final effort was to be made and completely close the narrow gorge through which the river flowed. It appears, however, that a wild rumour went abroad, that in order to be successful, a couple of workmen were to be sacrificed on the spot by the contractor. When the hour arrived for stopping the water the contractor,—a mild, benevolent English gentleman—appeared on the scene with two thousand workmen all of whom had heard of the intended sacrifice, but who were individually buoyed up with the consolation that, according to the theory of chances, it was nine hundred and ninety-nine to one against his being either of the selected victims. At a given signal the two thousand baskets were filled with earth and each man hurried to throw the contents into the breach. The contractor, who was in happy ignorance of the sinister rumour,

was naturally somewhat excited, and anxious that the work should proceed properly, and seeing one of the workmen throwing earth into the wrong place, seized him by the neck in order to direct him aright; but the man unfortunately slipped and fell into the water. Then a panic seized upon the crowd. It was evident the sacrifice had begun, and throwing down their baskets the terrified workmen started off across the country as fast as their legs could carry them, never thinking for a moment to rescue their fellow labourers, or to prevent further sacrifice except by running away. It was lucky, however, for the work that, on looking back, some of the fugitives saw the contractor, not as they expected keeping the man's head under water, but actually helping him out, with profuse apologies and promises of buksheesh for the mishap. It then occurred to the fugitives that, after all, the rumour of sacrifice must be an idle tale; and they returned quietly to their work.

But although the natives of Monghyr are not ashamed to proclaim their cowardice during life they show a courage, surprising to Europeans, on the approach of death, both when they die in

their beds and when they suffer a violent death by the hand of the hangman.

In 1858, superintending the execution of criminals was one of the duties which junior civilians had to perform; and the first man whose execution I superintended was a Hindoo who, in a fit of jealousy, had chopped off his wife's head. On entering the cell where he was confined in the jail, as the sun was appearing above the horizon on the morning fixed for the execution; I expected to find the man in a state of terror similar to that described by Dickens in his "Visit to Newgate." I was surprised, however, to find him seated with the utmost composure in the corner of his cell; and after making a bow, he said he had a request to make; namely, that hearing from the jailor the gallows was at some distance from the jail he was anxious to beguile the walk there by eating sweatmeats. As I saw no reason why the request should be denied, the extraordinary item of four annas, or sixpence, was included in that month's contingent expenses of the jail, for sweatmeats supplied to a condemned felon in order to beguile his walk to the gallows.

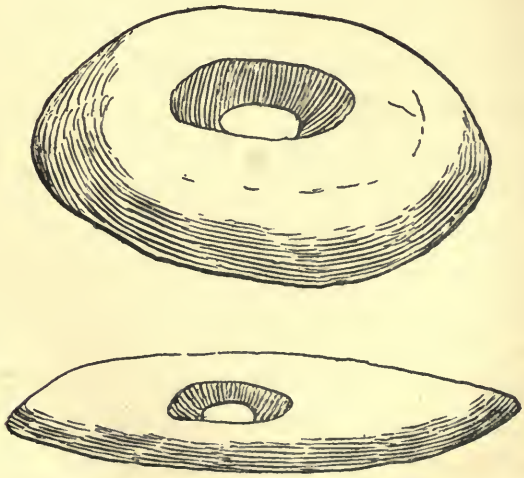
Directly the sweatmeats arrived, the procession started; followed by an orderly crowd of men, women, and children, who came out to see the execution as a crowd assembles in a back street of London to see an exhibition of Punch and Judy.

On our arrival at the foot of the gallows, the crowd took their seats upon the ground; and the condemned man after waiting for a few seconds to finish the last morsel, mounted the gallows with indifference and was soon a corpse.

On another occasion I had to superintend the execution of a policeman in 1858 for mutiny. On his way to the gallows he called on the crowd to rescue him, on the score that he was a martyr for the holy religion of Mahomet. As I was the only European present, there would not have been much difficulty in rescuing him; but not a man moved, and I could not help comparing the crowd to a flock of sheep witnessing one of their number being carried off by the butcher to the shambles.

During my cold weather tours in camp I made constant inquiries from all likely to give me information regarding the antiquities of Monghyr, but very little success attended my

efforts. The white ants and turbulent times have together swept away nearly all records of the past, and Indian traditions are so mixed up with gods and goddesses, that it is impossible to distinguish what is true from what is false. The country adjacent to the Kharakpoor hills was probably inhabited at a time when the plains of Bengal had not risen from the bed of the ocean; and as the foundations of the Irrigation works were being excavated perforated stones were found sixteen feet below the bed of the little river Mun. These stones were



Perforated stones, found 16 feet below the bed of the river Mun.

presented to me, and exhibited at one of the Asiatic Society's meetings in Calcutta. They were considered by some savants present to be part of querns, or handmills used for grinding corn, similar to those used by the Trojans, but to the ordinary observer they appear like weapons, when properly adjusted to a stick or handle.

The ancient sculpture of the Hindoos was nearly all broken up by the Mahomedans when they ruled in Monghyr; but pious hands have collected the scattered pieces; and in most villages under the sacred figs, may be seen legs, and arms, and faces of idols with the noses broken off, heaped up to guide the thoughts of the simple villagers in prayer. Perfect idols are consequently very rare, and during four years hunting I succeeded in procuring only a single specimen. At the base of this idol, which may be seen in the South Kensington Museum, is an inscription which no one in Monghyr could read. I sent a copy to an antiquary in Calcutta, Baboo Rajandro Mitter, who kindly sent me the following memorandum with a translation :—

"The four-armed divinity is Siddhesvari and

the person who dedicated the image is named Ghumtesvari. She calls herself a queen (*Chattarika*) of the family of Huddon, in the country of Champa, which is the old name of the province included within the area extending from Bhaugulpoor to Monghyr.

"In the absence of all information about the lady and her tribe, I should guess the record to be of the twelfth or thirteenth century."

In many parts of Monghyr traditions of buried treasure exist and are firmly believed in by the simple folk, who derive no little pleasure in thinking over the delight which unearthing unclaimed money would afford. Last March a deputation came to my house with the startling news that a clue to immense treasure had been found. It was said that a descendant of one of the former Royal Treasurers of Monghyr having occasion to send an ancient amulet, an heirloom, for repair, the goldsmith, into whose hands it came, discovered a paper inside on which was described the whereabouts of a large idol of solid gold, and fourteen lacs of rupees in cash. As the place mentioned belongs to Government the deputation required my permission to dig for the supposed treasure; but

I threw cold water on the matter by pointing out that the document was evidently not genuine, first because the character and words were not those current at the time when it was alleged to have been written, and secondly because the place indicated was fourteen feet below the soil, a depth where water remains nearly all the year round in Monghyr. The people, however, refused to accept my theory as conclusive, and as they appeared to have plenty of spare cash, I gave the required permission, thinking that they might as well spend their money in digging as in any other harmless amusement. A band of coolies was accordingly employed; and in the evening, when I went to see what had been done, I found an immense crowd had assembled round a pit fifteen feet deep, and up to the workmen's ankles in water, but the only treasures brought to light were, a glass bottle, which once contained Hodgson's ale, and an old tobacco pipe. The deputation now declared that they had been digging at the wrong place; and they demanded my permission to continue their excavations; but I told them they must settle with the tenant who had taken a lease of the

land, for I was unwilling to have any further connection with the undertaking.

The tenant thinking this a good opportunity for making capital out of his lease; proposed one of three courses. Either that the deputation should purchase his lease for five thousand pounds; or that the members should give him one thousand pounds down for his permission to dig; or that they should give him half their treasure when found. Before leaving the place, however, I advised all parties to study the chapter on cheating, as set forth in the Indian Penal Code; and having done this my theory about the supposed treasure was considered sound; the pit was filled up, and I heard nothing more about the matter; though there are not wanting those who believe firmly that the treasure only waits to be dug up.

CHAPTER II.

Poverty of the People of Monghyr.—Cheapness of Food.—The Crops of the District.—Abundance of Fish.—Fishing in the Government Tank.—Water Insects.—Catching a Raja.—The Mango and Mahwa Crops.—The Mahwa Flowers as an Article of Commerce.—Oil seeds.—Indigo.—Opium.—Tobacco.—Government Experimental Garden.—Indolence of the Natives.—Productive Powers of the Land.—Potatoes.—The Native Method of Feeding Cattle.—Method of raising Funds for Cattle Breeding.—Certain Method for catching a Thief.—Exciting Chase.

Although the people of Monghyr are very poor, there is probably no country in the world where, in ordinary times, food is so cheap as it is in the district here. Alternate sun and rain, aided by a mean temperature of 80° in the shade, raise a succession of crops all the year round, whilst fish increase and multiply in every stream and pool. Rice, the principal crop, which covers about one half of the total

cultivated area of the district, is cut in December, and is followed by the rabbi crop, which covers nearly all the residue of the arable land. This crop consists chiefly of wheat, barley, peas, pulses, vegetables, and oil seeds, harvested in April. It is raised on the highest lands around villages, and on the low-lying tracts inundated during the rains. It is usually followed by a second crop of monocotyledonous plants or grasses, Indian corn, and millets, which ripen during August aud September.

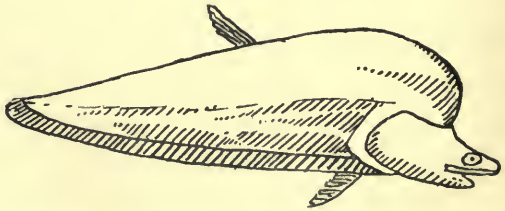
The latter crop yields what may be called the poor man's harvest, as the produce is nearly all consumed in the district; whilst much of the more valuable wheat and rice is exported to pay the rent of the land.

When a poor low-caste man wishes to give a feast to a large number of his friends, and do it cheaply; he can purchase a large fish,—a *Pangasius Buchanani*, or a *Bagarius Yarrellii*,—weighing fifty pounds, for a shilling; another shilling will procure a hundred pounds of sweet potatoes (*Convolvulus edulis*). Salt and spices will cost him two pence more, and if he can afford meat, a shilling will purchase a fat kid.

If this is not considered food enough, a penny will procure a large basket of cucumbers, or melons, sufficient for the whole party, whilst a farthing will enable them all to smoke till midnight, if they feel inclined to do so. The Government duty steps in and places a check on the poor man's conviviality, and indulgence in intoxicating drink, though palm-toddy, or mahwa spirit, can be purchased very cheap when compared with the price of English beer.

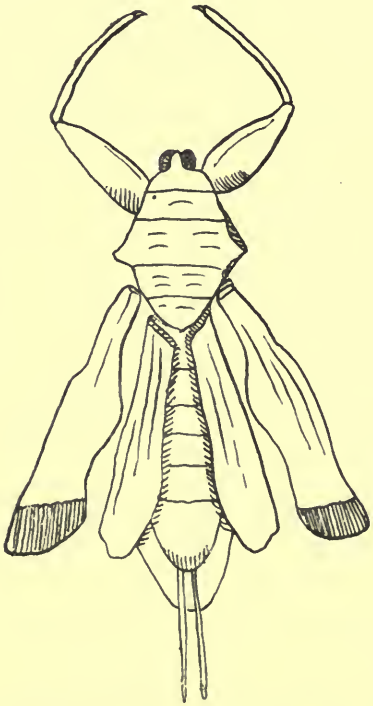
Not only are the scaleless siluroids cheap; the various carps which swarm in Monghyr waters are cheap also. There is a large tank adjoining the Government gardens which General Murray, in charge of the gardens, rented. We planted crimson lotuses and the Victoria Regia there, besides stocking the water with fish. This was a favourite place with native anglers, who would sit patiently all day by the side of the water, under a burning sun, and think themselves rewarded if they caught a carp for dinner. There was, however, no real sport in catching the fish with a rod and line; so when the water was low in May, we had a grand battue and caught all the fish he could catch in a net. A native, was sent round, and

at sunrise every one assembled who wished to see the fun. There were two acres of water, and the net we used stretched from one bank to another; twenty pair of willing hands dragged the net along, three or four men following in the water behind. Directly the net approached the shore the water seemed alive with fish; some rushed headlong between the meshes, others sprang high up in the air, whilst others were caught in the fishermen's hands; and when we counted all that were brought to shore, we found there were five hundred carp (*Labio rohita*, *Labio calbas*, and *Cirrhina mirgala*). There were also several cat-fish (*Macronis Lamarckii*) and a few specimens of the curious *Hunchback* (*Notopterus Kapirat*), one of which I secured for the Oxford Museum, where its skeleton may now be seen.



The Moh or Hunchback (*Notopterus Kapirat*).

The net also brought to shore a cartload of the *Vallisneria spiralis*, and Frogbits, which keep the stagnant water pure; shrimps by scores were kicking about in the weeds, hail-fellows-well-met with the *Big Water-bug* (*Belostoma indica*) in company with his slender cousin (*Ranatra elongata*), which is not unlike the



The Big Water-bug (*Belostoma indica*).

Linear Water-scorpion of English waters. The Big Water-bug being nearly five inches long, is a very formidable looking animal: and commits much havoc in the tank. I caught them occasionally on my dinner table as they flew there attracted by the light. I dissected several, and found that they secrete two essential odours, one bug-like, probably used against enemies, the other resembling the scent of Jargonel-pear-drops, apparently reserved for friends. The native fishermen, who observe the habits of animals, could explain the curious forked-tail breathing apparatus of this giant among insects.

By the time we had examined the contents of the net, which would have filled a good sized cart; hawkers had arrived, and we put up the fish to auction. Fish, however, that day appeared in little demand, and as five rupees or ten shillings, was the highest bid offered for the lot, we distributed what we had caught among the gardeners, and the neighbouring poor.

It so happened that one of the fishermen who were present, had brought his cast-net, similar to the kind which is used in England. The

natives can throw it with very great precision, whirling it over their heads in a manner different to the English method, and which is very difficult to learn. After a considerable amount of practice I could cast it fairly in a circle, but with no very great precision; and on this occasion by the request of the assembled crowd, I undertook to exhibit the English and native methods of casting for their benefit. Just then a Raja appeared with a considerable retinue on the scene; one of his followers bearing the silver stick which proclaimed his dignity and his rank. Although he was no doubt surprised to find me engaged in so low-caste an occupation, he was far too good a courtier to say so; indeed he was loud in his declarations that I should exhibit unusual skill, and that it would be quite an honour for any fish to be captured by my hands. I begged the bystanders to keep clear, as the net often took an erratic course; but the little Raja, to show his confidence in my skill, persisted in standing near. When all was ready and everyone was on the tip-toe of expectation, I whirled the net over my head, and quite unintentionally threw it with the utmost precision over the little Raja,

who was brought to his knees, and so effectually entangled in the folds of string that he could not move. The shouts of laughter which followed—for everyone saw that it was a pure accident—were so general and loud that even the great man's most devoted attendants could not recover themselves for some time, and come to their master's aid; but at last we got him out, and considering that he joined subsequently in the laughter, I feel satisfied that he bore me no malice, or thought for a moment that I had caught him on purpose.

In speaking of the food-supplies of Monghyr, mention must be made of the Mahwa crop gathered in April; and the mango crop gathered in June, as they form very important items in the food-supply which the poor people consume. Every village contains mango groves, but, like orchards in England, their yield is very uncertain, a good season coming, on an average, not oftener than once in three years. The ordinary mangos which the lower classes eat, bear the same relation to the selected kinds seen on the tables of Europeans, as English cider-apples bear to the finest ribston pippins. North of the Ganges nine-tenths of

the trees are cultivated mangos. In the country south of the river, although mangos are numerous, they give way to the mahwa. This tree, the *Bassia latifolia* of botanists, and a member of the Sapodilla family, though little known beyond the country where it grows, may be ranked among the most useful trees in the world. It is a fountain producing food, wine, and oil. Food to thousands of poor people, who find the succulent flowers, both fresh and dried, wholesome food; wine, or rather spirit, distilled from the flowers, to the whole of the district; and oil, pressed from the fruit, used for the adulteration of ghi in this district and in Calcutta.

Anyone standing on the hills at Kharakpoor looking over the plains below, may see a million Mahwa trees which, if he is fresh from Bengal, he will probably mistake for mango trees; but unlike mangos so uncertain in their yield, the mahwa crop never fails; for the part eaten is the succulent corolla, which falls in great profusion from the trees in March and April. This season is a great feasting time for the humbler members of creation. Birds, squirrels, and tupaias feast among the branches by day,

whilst the poor villagers collect the corollas which have fallen on the ground. Nor does the feasting end with the day. At sunset peacocks, and jungle-fowl steal out of the surrounding jungle to share the mahwa with deer and bears, many of which fall victims to the bullets or arrows of hunters who sit concealed overhead.

Bassia latifolia in flower.

Of the vast amount of mahwa collected, by far the greater part is eaten; and during the

famine of 1873–74 it kept alive thousands who otherwise must have starved. All famine officers in Behar will recall its peculiar sickly odour as they passed through the villages where it had been collected. The residue which is not eaten, is taken to the Government distilleries, and there, with the aid of rude stills, is converted into a strong-smelling spirit, which bears considerable resemblance to whisky. On arrival at the distillery, the mahwa, when first I went to Monghyr, paid a duty of four rupees four annas, or eight shillings and sixpence per hundred-weight, on the supposition that this would make about three gallons of proof spirit, but after a considerable number of experiments this duty was raised to about ten shillings per hundred-weight. It would probably, however, answer very well for the Government to substitute European patent stills for the rude machines which the natives use, as over six gallons of proof spirit has been made in England from a hundred-weight of mahwa, which I sent home to England. A gentleman who was living at Monghyr when I was there, took out a patent for removing, with a very simple process, the fusil oil, or what-

ever it is which gives mahwa spirit its peculiar smell, and for some time we thought he would make a rapid fortune. The demand promised to be immense; but the Board of Revenue, on receiving a petition from rum-distillers in Calcutta, imposed a duty which completely put an end to its manufacture.

I have little doubt that mahwa might be introduced into England with advantage, both for manufacturing spirit, and as food for pigs and cattle; it combines all the elements needful to secure demand,—cheapness, abundance of saccharine matter, unlimited supply, and good keeping qualities. I have myself seen hundreds if not thousands of square miles covered with mahwa trees. At present a vast portion of the corollas feed the forest birds and beasts; once create a demand for them in England and they would all be carefully preserved, and not allowed, as at present, to run to waste. The tree thrives on dry stony land where the plough cannot be used. The exceptional keeping qualities of the mahwa has been fully proved by me, for a ton which I brought home for experiment is as good now as it was when first dried eighteen months ago. The cost of car-

riage is against it; but as it keeps so well it might be brought in sailing vessels round the Cape. If Government would monopolize the export of mahwa, I believe it might, in time, be made to supply a vast revenue to the State.

The flowers of *Bassia longifolia* of Madras which are somewhat similar to mahwa flowers, have found their way to London; but I have not been able to ascertain for what purpose they were brought, and why the importation has proved a failure hitherto.

Among the plants which are cultivated for oil in Monghyr, mustard must be mentioned first; for many thousand tons of mustard oil are manufactured yearly for home consumption or exportation.

Flax, or Linseed, as it is called in India, ranks next in importance, and may be seen in almost every village; castor-oil comes next, and then sessamum, poppy, safflower, starflower (*Verbesina sativa*), and mahwa, already mentioned.

Indigo occupies nearly sixteen thousand acres in Monghyr, chiefly north of the Ganges. There are a dozen factories, most of which are held by

Europeans; and several lacs of rupees are yearly spent in manufacturing the dye. The cultivation is disliked very much by the ryots, or petty land-holders, because the planters take up the best fields. The land-owners rather encourage indigo, as the planters pay them very high rent, and the low castes, such as the mousers, and swineherds, flourish under indigo, because they get plenty of work in cultivating the fields, and are paid in cash instead of in kind.

Much has been said and written about opium and indigo cultivation taking up so much land which might be planted down with food grains; but if the cultivation of these plants where discontinued, the result would merely be a considerable increase to the present pauper population of the district, without bringing any advantage to the State. As it is, the land now taken—about forty thousand acres for opium and indigo together—is very highly cultivated, and contributes largely to the public revenue.

Tobacco is cultivated to a very considerable extent in Monghyr; and is said to be a profitable crop, though some experiments, which were made by General Murray and myself in the

Government gardens, point in a contrary direction. We procured Manilla, Havannah, and native seed; and collected suitable manure,—wood ashes containing potash, likely to suit the public taste; and we prepared an acre of land in a manner which would have delighted the most fastidious Middlesex market-gardener. Nor did the plants fall short of our expectations; for notwithstanding a desperate attack of field crickets, which a small army of boys were brought up to repel, they grew to a size which excited the admiration of everyone who saw them. When, however, we made up our accounts we found our tobacco had cost us in production nearly double the price it fetched in the market; for the weed, although excellent, was pronounced worth only five shillings per hundred-weight. There is no reason, however, except the fastidious taste of the British public, why Monghyr should not supply the London market with cigars. I proposed making "Imperial cigars," and exporting them in gaudy boxes to attract the rising generation of London; but the experiment ultimately dropped.

In conducting our experimental garden in

Monghyr, we soon found that, instead of teaching the natives, we had much, if not everything, to learn from them; and as regards raising crops at a profit we had no chance whatever in the race. We saw, however, what the soil can produce aided by alternate sunshine and rain, if only it has fair play. The natives, particularly the high-caste farmers, consider it beneath their dignity to manure their land; and consequently all the fertilizing phosphates and ammonia which nature supplies, instead of returning to the soil from whence they sprang, find their way into the Ganges, and are carried to the Sunderbuns which form the Delta of the Ganges, where, to this generation at all events, they are completely lost. The soil of Monghyr since it was first cultivated has consequently deteriorated. Rice has been grown on the same land year after year for centuries, and but for the yearly rain, and the animals which are born and die, forming manure within the water standing in the rice fields, the land long ago would have been quite exhausted.

But I had ample opportunity for seeing what the soil can yield when properly manured. The municipality of Monghyr received a revenue of

about three thousand pounds per annum, for keeping the town sweet and clean, for keeping up the police, and for repairing the roads. Every morning the town was swept; and all the sewage was buried in a farm which had been set aside for the purpose outside the walls. The farmer, a low-caste man, paid four hundred per cent. higher rent than his neighbours; and yet he made a fortune by his crops, which succeeded each other in rapid succession all the year round. Cucumbers, egg-plants, potatoes, Indian corn, capsicums, cauliflowers, peas which I could hardly push my way through, and the edible grass known as *Sorghum saccharatum*, which completely hid me and my horse as I rode beside it. At first we thought the purchasers in the bazaar would object to consume the produce raised upon this highly manured land; but the farmer knew his countrymen better than we did. He disposed of every grain he raised; for the people bought it fast enough and asked no questions.

The town was kept very clean by the municipality, but whether the natives benefited by the plan is not quite certain. It is certain they remonstrate against contributing to the tax,

preferring to keep their money and their dirt. If there is any truth in the theory of natural selection and survival of the fittest, the natives of Monghyr, who have lived among bad odours for centuries, require a certain amount of sulphuretted hydrogen in order to keep them well and happy. What is good for Europeans is not necessarily good for them, as can be very easily demonstrated in the Monghyr bazaar. One of my clerks was a fat jovial fellow but very dirty; and the municipal officers were always bringing charges against him for refusing to keep his premises clean; so I went one day to see the place. I could hardly enter the house, the stench was so dreadful, and I found that this jovial and apparently healthy fellow's bed was over an open drain.

The cultivation of potatoes gains ground every year, and would be extended much more than it is but for the difficulty in preserving seed-potatoes through the rainy season. It is a profitable crop, an acre yielding six tons of potatoes worth twenty pounds. The unenclosed nature of the country is a constant source of irritation to the market-gardeners, and a feud, arising from conflicting interests, exists between

them and the Ghosis, or dairymen, in Monghyr. A Ghosi sets up a dairy without either capital or land. His lean kine are let loose at night, and left to forage for themselves; wandering over the country, snatching a mouthful of early peas or potatoes from every field. The poor market-gardeners sit up all night to drive their persecutors away, and occasionally take them to the pound where sixpence is paid by their owners for their release; a very poor consolation to the market-gardener whose crop has been damaged to the extent of several pounds.

The theory of natural selection and survival of the fittest is well illustrated by these cattle; for a race of long-legged cunning cattle has sprung up which are able to forage for themselves during the night, and as a rule defy all efforts to capture them. I had practical experience of the existing evil soon after my arrival at Monghyr; for one of the Ghosi's cows entered my garden on a moon-light night in December, and ate up four rows of young peas which had been planted in order to feast my friends at Christmas. When I got up at daybreak next morning I saw the cow still

feasting on my peas; and on raising an alarm it jumped the garden wall and galloped off across country. It so happened that my horse was standing saddled at my door, ready for my morning ride; so I at once gave chase, and galloped after the retreating cow as hard as my horse's legs could carry me. It would almost be worth while importing these Ghosis' cows to hunt with English stag-hounds, for never after stag or fox had I such exciting sport as I had after this long-legged cow. Hedges and ditches, and watercourses were left behind in rapid succession, for the cow seemed able to surmount every obstacle. At last we reached the bazaar, which fortunately contained very few people at that early hour, or numbers must have been knocked over before the flying cow. At last I fairly ran her to ground in the centre of a labyrinth of bazaar. Seeing an open door she bolted into the house, upsetting the owner, who was running out to see what was the matter. When the man got up he declared at first that the cow did not belong to him, but subsequently he acknowledged that it did, and when I told him of the damage it had done he

cursed it and its ancestors up and down dale in a frightful manner, but he threw all the blame upon his cow-herd, a half starved boy, who had been sleeping in the cow-shed all night. Although, as chief officer in the district, I made it a rule never to punish or prosecute anyone for an offence committed against myself, I found on inquiry that the damage done by the ghosis' cows was immense, and could be tolerated no longer; so I put a stop to the nuisance by encouraging the market-gardeners to prosecute, and fining the persons convicted in my court the full amount of damage done, and handing the money over to the owner of the field. After two or three convictions, the dairy-men, finding this method of feeding their cattle expensive, tied up their cows at night, and fed them properly at their own expense by day.

Nothing in India denotes the poverty of the people so much as their miserable cattle, which, if they had fair play, would thrive as well in India as in Europe, or Australia. But they, like their owners, have increased beyond the supply of food. The land-holders never think of keeping part of the village lands for

grazing-ground, or laying in a regular store of fodder for their cattle, but leave them to pick up a scanty meal wherever they can, by the road side, or by pilfering their neighbours' fields.

When the population of Monghyr was less than it is at present, marshes and waste lands not considered worth cultivating were left for the cattle; but now every available acre is appropriated for growing food for man; and the cattle being ousted from their feeding-grounds get thinner and thinner every year.

As in the case of man, the epidemics which break out amongst the cattle give the survivors some little chance of getting fat, and the question arises whether it is not fortunate that the remedies hitherto adopted for stamping out epidemics among cattle in India have proved of very little avail.

I always looked suspiciously on cases of alleged cattle-poisoning, reported to be very prevalent in Monghyr. It was said that the Muchis or hide-dealers poisoned the cattle in order to get their skins. But when an epidemic broke out in a village, and the people

could not ascertain its nature, they were apt to declare it was caused by poison. This is what occurs occasionally, I believe, when pestilence breaks out in European cities; and with the aid of a little arsenic, and two or three unscrupulous witnesses, there is not much difficulty then in getting any suspected person, hide-dealer or other, into trouble.

My view of the matter was corroborated by the reports of the chemical examiner; for he seldom could detect poison in the stomach of the cow said to have been poisoned, and sent to him for examination.

Other causes which lead to deterioration in the cattle are, that the sacred bulls which in former days roamed about the country at their pleasure, of late years have been voted a nuisance and seized for dragging municipal and other public carts; and the main body of the people decline thinning out their cattle by eating beef.

One of my servants was a great breeder of lean kine; and in order to stock his farm he was not over scrupulous in his notions regarding *meum* and *tuum*. I bought a large silver bracelet on one occasion, and, incautiously leaving it on

my table, next morning it had disappeared. I gave myself very little concern, however, at its loss; for I knew I could get it back, having a plan for recovering property stolen by my servants which I never knew to fail. I said nothing about what had happened, except to my faithful valet; and in his presence placed two marked rupees powdered over with nitrate of silver in the place where the bracelet had been. Next morning my valet reported that the money also had disappeared; and then I felt certain of my man. All my servants were summoned by beat of drum, and placed like soldiers in a line, and I harangued them telling them of my loss, and how wrong it was for a servant to rob his master. I watched the faces present, but they gave no sign; and then I told them what I had done, and how the thief would have a caustic mark upon his hand. The first man who stole a glance at his hand was of course the holder of my property, and on seeing, what probably he had not noticed, the mark of a rupee burnt on his hand, he turned and fled across country as hard as his legs could carry him, pursued by his fellow-servants, who vied with each other in catching

him. After an exciting chase, the culprit wa secured, and brought back to my house, where he made a full confession of his guilt; disgorged my bracelet and money, and then was drummed out of my premises, amid the execrations of his fellow-servants.

CHAPTER III.

The Birds of Prey in Monghyr.—Their Nesting in Villages.—Vultures' Nests.—Eagle's Nest attacked by a Lizard.—Tree Planting along the District Roads.—Novel Method of preventing Damage to the Trees.—Pilgrims to Bhaijnath.—Christianity in Monghyr.—Cholera.—Green Pigeons.—The Swinging Festival.—Camping in Monghyr.—Supplies to Government Officers.—Treatment of Native Servants.—Bribery and Corruption.—Present from a Native.—Setting up House in Monghyr.—The pecuniary State of the Indian Civil Service.

The birds of prey, being seldom molested in India, are not so careful as they are in England to keep out of the sight of man or hurry off at his approach under pain of being shot down and hung up as malefactors. This is always a source of satisfaction to the naturalist, who may, on arrival in India, study the habits of vultures, kites, storks, and other birds little known in England, from his club window

in Calcutta; or he may observe, as I have, an eagle sitting on a gas-lamp in Chauringhi.

In Monghyr the eagles came to the villages to breed; and on one of the Government estates under my charge, I found a nest year after year in a banyan tree which grew in the court-yard of one of the tenants' houses. The ground below was strewn with fish bones and the shields of river turtles, which the villagers were too apathetic to remove.

But although the natives do not object to eagles, they are very superstitious regarding vultures, and they consider it a bad omen if one of these birds should build near their houses. A villager on one of the Government estates told me that he intended pulling down his house because a vulture, which had a nest close by, defiled it by sitting on the roof. I advised him to pay out the vulture by pulling down its nest, whilst leaving his own house standing; and, being a sensible fellow, he followed my advice.

On the 1st of November 1876, I started to make my cold weather tour in the Monghyr district, and my first day's journey lay along a low country covered with rice fields. The em-

banked road was lined with rows of trees, which afforded shade to the traveller and eyries to vultures and eagles, which frequented the banks of the Ganges close by, either on the look-out for carrion or for fish. As my groom could climb like a monkey, I occasionally sent him up the trees to see what the nests contained, much to the surprise of travellers passing along the road, who evidently thought bird's-nesting, particularly when the birds were vultures, a very abnormal pastime for a District Officer.

At the first village where we stopped to change horses, the zemindar, or squire, had made an appointment to meet me. As I was an hour before time he had not arrived, and, on alighting from my cart, a magnificent ring-tailed sea eagle (*Haliætus fulviventer*) flew off its nest in the sacred fig-tree under which my fresh horse was tethered. As I had never examined an eagle's nest, and the tree was an easy one to climb, I took off my coat, and, amid the admiring exclamations of two or three villagers who were looking on, I began climbing the tree, and had just arrived at the nest when my groom called out that a crowd of people were coming. On looking down I saw the zemindar,

followed by a number of his tenants and dependants, enter the grove below me, astonishment depicted on their faces, for they could not make out what I was doing, bird's-nesting being a pastime unknown to the upper classes in India. I put, however, as good a face as I could on the matter; and, on coming down in my shirt sleeves, apologized for being caught in so undignified a position, at the same time trying my best to remove the unfavourable impression which my introduction must have made, by having a long conversation with the zemindar about his land, and, what to him was most interesting of all, about a dispute pending in the civil court between himself and his relations. The old gentleman often called on me subsequently, and then he never failed to remind me of our queer introduction, as though it were the best joke in the world. Indeed, from the way in which he alluded to it, it appears that unintentionally I had established an era in the village, and days or years were counted from the time when "La-koot Sahib" climbed up to the eagle's nest.

Having discovered my taste for natural history and collecting specimens, my visitor seldom

came empty-handed, and, with an air of much importance, he would bring out from under his ample flowing garments a basket of crocodile's eggs, or the flower or fruit of some rare tree in his neighbourhood.

I have many vultures and eagles eggs which I collected in Monghyr; and it was astonishing to see how the natives would climb to the tops of the tallest trees without any fear. Height from the ground did not seem to affect their brains or make them dizzy. All they stipulated was that I should stand below and make a demonstration against the old birds in case they showed fight; but there was seldom any cause for my interference. The old birds, particularly the vultures, usually flew away, leaving their eggs or their young ones, which I never molested, to take care of themselves.

On one occasion only I was unable to persuade the natives to climb up to a nest.

I was walking one evening in the Tipperah district, with my gun in my hand, in order to shoot, if possible, something for dinner, when my attention was drawn to the wild cries of a pair of fishing eagles (*Haliætus leucogaster*); and, on coming near, I saw them alternately swoop-

ing down at a nest, a huge hill of sticks, in a silk-cotton tree, surrounded by dense and almost impenetrable jungle. At first I thought the nest belonged to a rival, and that the eagles were trying to pull it to pieces; but, as I stood looking on, a villager came up and said he had seen a *large gho-sámp*, or *snake lizard*, climb the tree in order to rob the nest; and he pointed to a dragon-like tail sticking out among the branches. All this time the eagles kept swooping alternately at the robber, striking at him with their talons as they passed; but he received their attacks with the utmost indifference, being

The Gho-Samp (*Hydrosaurus salvator*).

well protected by his coat of mail. A pair of kites which had their nest in an adjacent ta-

marind tree, added their shrill screams to the scene, whilst a troup of monkeys in a cassia tree sat viewing the row with evident relish, and, by their gestures, apparently were urging the combatants to renewed exertions.

The eagles, thinking the kites, too, were enemies, and in league with the lizard, every now and then made a swoop at them, returning with a rush through the air, their feathers ruffled and their claws distended, as though in the last extremity of despair.

Although I wished to see how the affair would end without my interference, evening was coming on, so I sent a bullet through the nest and the lizard's body. With a bound the robber sprang high into the air, and, falling clear of the nest, came crashing down through the branches to my feet. Here he quickly regained his legs, and, darting out his snake-like tongue, was making off into the jungle, when I stopped him with a charge of large shot. Even then he showed signs of vitality, and kept clawing the air with his dragon-like talons, until a rustic, who was looking on, finished him off with one of the branches which had been broken off in his fall.

By this time a considerable crowd of persons from the adjacent villages had assembled, and each had something to say about the natural history of the gho-sámp. A police inspector who was present, declared one of these lizards had carried off and devoured his favourite cat. Another that it demolished its enemies by blowing on them; whilst all declared its bite was poisonous. I tried to persuade one of the bystanders to climb the tree and see what the lizard had been at; but partly from fear of the eagles, and partly because the tree was a difficult one to climb, no one volunteered. I persuaded the natives, however, to drag the lizard to my tent, and on measuring it I found it within an inch of five feet long.

I wrote an account of the above scene soon after it occurred to the "Field," and the following note was subsequently made by Mr. Edward Blyth, the late accomplished Curator of the Calcutta Museum.

"*Gho-sámps and Sea-Eagles.*—Having been questioned more than once about "gho-sámps" in connection with the remarkable observation recorded by Mr. E. Lockwood (in p. 273) of one of these lizards having been shot by him in the act of robbing the nest of a sea-eagle, it may be as

well to explain that the reptiles known by that name in Bengal are the Varanidæ, miscalled "iguánas" by most Europeans in the countries which they inhabit, but especially in India and Australia, the true leaf-eating iguánas being peculiar to the tropical forests of the New World. Three species of gho-sámp are common in Lower Bengal—viz., *Hydrosaurus salvator* (*Varanus bivittatus* of Dumeril and Bibron), *Monitor dracœna* (*V. bengalensis*, D. and B.), and *Empagusia flavescens* (*V. Picquotii*, D. and B.), all of which I have obtained in the Sundarbáns. The first, when full grown, is over 6 ft. in length (74 in.), the second is about 5 ft., and the third 4 ft. or thereabouts. Mr. Lockwood's example was "within an inch of 5 ft. long," so that it may have been either of the first two, which may be readily distinguished from each other at any age by the position of the nostrils, the Hydrosaurus having them placed near the tip of the muzzle, and the Monitor half-way between the lip and the eye. All of these climb trees with facility, though I have never remarked one more than a few feet from the ground. I suspect that the Hydrosaurus is by far the most common species, and the most likely of them to have been the nest robber. With regard to the "grey-backed eagles (*Haliaëtus leucogaster*)," I should hardly have supposed that so many nests of this particular species would have been met with, but that the majority would have belonged to *Pontoaëtus icthyaëtus*, with here and there one of *Haliaëtus leucoryphus* (v. *Macei*), all fishing eagles, though the *H. leucogaster* (*seu blagrus*) would seem to prey chiefly on sea-snakes. The popular notion of the bite of the gho-sámp being poisonous is of course nonsense, and the young have often been brought to

me as the dread "bis-cobra" of the natives, alleged by them to be terrifically venomous—a delusion in which every Bengali has implicit and ineradicable belief. In other parts of the country very different lizards have been brought to me as the formidable bis-cobra, though most frequently the young of the Varanidæ. The most efficient defensive weapon of the gho-sámps is the tail, which they can lash out to some purpose; and if the tail of these lizards is mutilated, the lost portion of it is in them never recovered, as is the case with various other saurians. This is well illustrated by a large example of the Australian species which has long lived in the Zoological Gardens, while its companion, a large South American lizard (*Teius teguexin*), belonging to another family, has renewed a considerable portion of its caudal end."

The Monghyr road committee paid particular attention to tree-planting along the Government roads in Monghyr; but the young trees required constant watching and watering during the hot season in order to keep them alive. The village goats were a constant source of danger, and were perpetually on the look out for some weak point in the surrounding fence to get at the trees. Then travellers were continually snapping off the twigs for tooth-brushes. In vain the culprits were summoned and fined small sums for committing mischief. The trees, particularly the Neem

trees (*Melia indica*), were all being killed, when the damage was completely stopped by the simple method of hanging cows' bones among the branches. The Hindoos, of course, considered the trees polluted, and incapable of being touched, whilst the Mussulmans also, who have learnt many superstitions from the Hindoos, passed the trees unmolested. The Sahora (*Streblus asper*), a member of the fig and nettle family, is a favourite tree for tooth-brushes among the Hindoos; but the Mahomedans look on it as accursed, for tradition says it was the only wood which would ignite when unbelievers sacrificed their saint Kalil-ulla.

Besides the Melias, we planted figs and black plum-trees (*Eugenia jambolana*), tamarinds, and mangos, all of which afford agreeable shade to the foot-passengers who mainly use the roads. During the cold season hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, in Indian file, may be seen on their way to Baijnath, or further on to Jaggernath; and it was curious to contrast their quiet demeanour and silence to that of the more spirited Englishmen going to a boat-race, or to the Derby. Only occasionally as I passed

would they raise a heathen shout, which I often wished they would change for the more melodius "Onward Christian Soldiers," or the "Pilgrims of the Night."

But Christianity unfortunately makes no progress in Monghyr. The people see the worst side of European life in Calcutta, and in places resorted to by adventurers from England. They take a special note of English vices, and pray that the day may be far distant when Bengal will become a Christian country. Many religious natives read the Bible, and take the Christian doctrines for their guide; but they fear by becoming avowed converts they will degenerate into the so-called Christians whom they see around. I shall never forget the look of horror which came over the features of an orphan-boy when I proposed sending him to a Christian mission; and a native police-inspector giving his verbal report about a notorious bad character, forgetting for the moment with whom he was talking, said, "Well, Sir, you may imagine what a bad lot this fellow is, when I tell you he has declared himself a Christian." If a good example had been shown by Europeans in India since the days of Clive, the

Hindoo religion long ago would have been swept into the Ganges. At present the progress of Christianity in Bengal may be fairly summed up in a communication made to me by one of the greatest philanthropists India ever saw, the late Dr. Duff, who told me that he had never known a true native convert to the Christian faith.

Driving along the Monghyr roads during the cold season, the traveller need never be in want of subjects to occupy his attention. Soon after wishing my friend, the zemindar, good-bye, and proceeding on my journey, I saw a man lying on the road-side apparently dead, and, on going up to him, I learnt that he was a palkee-bearer, who had been seized with cholera the previous evening, and left by his companions to get well or die by the road-side alone. Although suffering dreadfully from thirst, he had no strength to get at the water which filled the deep side cuttings of the road close by; and no one came to help him till my arrival, when my servants took compassion on him and gave him water, and with some difficulty we persuaded some low-caste men from a neighbouring village to carry him in a palkee to Monghyr.

Green pigeons (*Crocopus phœnicopterus*) are usually plentiful in the fig-trees by the road side; and the next place where I stopped to change horses, the tree under which my horse was feeding was quite alive with pigeons. As I stood watching them eating the small red figs, a bird-catcher came up with the apparatus of his trade. This is merely a bundle of bamboos which fit into each other—like the chimney-brooms or fishing-rods of England—with bird-lime at the top. Standing directly below the bird he hopes to catch, the fowler adds stick to stick until his victim, which does not notice the snare getting higher and higher, is reached, and its feathers entangled in the sticky mess, from which there is no escape.

At 10 o'clock I reached my tents at Kharakpoor, where the entire population, headed by the police, had turned out to meet me. The Santhals mustered strong, and the first person who gave me a welcoming salaam was a man who, the previous March, had given out his intention of defying the law, and, in spite of all that I could do, reviving the time-honoured charak-puja, or swinging festival, in which victims, generally hirelings from the lower classes,

are swung in the air suspended from the end of long bamboo poles with hooks stuck through the muscles of their backs.

One evening in March I received a telegram from the police at Kharakpoor, saying that a god had, so it was alleged, appeared to an old Santhal chief, urging him, if he wished to avert calamity from his race, to propitiate the gods by holding a good swinging festival; and, following the god's advice, a number of Santhals had assembled and made the necessary arrangements to hold the ceremony without delay. As charak-pujas are not now permitted to take place, I started off at once for Kharakpoor, in company with Major Waller, the superintendent of police, and arrived on the scene of action in time to find all the arrangements complete; and the victims, who had been kept without food for two days and could hardly stand from weakness, being led out to the suspending poles. The Santhals appeared much surprised at our appearance, but good-humouredly showed me the swinging hooks. I at once put these into my pocket, at the same time assuring the crowd that the god who had appeared to their chief had clearly intended to deceive—if he did appear

at all,—because the ceremony they intended to celebrate could only end in disaster to them all, and the ringleaders would find themselves before long in jail. Fortunately, among the crowd I recognised several men who had accompanied me in my excursions among the hills; and, taking them aside, I explained the utter impossibility of the festival taking place. Having gained these men over to our side, I repeated my assurances to the crowd; and it ended in the victims being released and the old dreamer being taken to the police-station, where he was kept as a hostage in honourable confinement until the festival day had passed.

One, of a pair of hooks, now in the Kensington Museum, made for the Swinging Festival.

During the cold season so many persons accompany the District Officer in camp, that, unless strict care is taken, they are apt to resemble a

swarm of locusts let loose upon the country, eating up all the food they come across. The only things, however, which we allowed the owner of the surrounding land to supply gratis were firewood, earthen water-pots, and straw, the whole lot costing a few shillings. We were always willing to pay for these things, but the landholder, or his agent, invariably declined to receive the money, and declared that the custom of supplying them had been so long established that he would be disgraced in the eyes of his neighbours if he accepted money for them now.

The case was different, however, with the poor hawkers who supplied the servants' food. These men always appeared at the tent door before the hour of starting, and stated that they had received full value for everything supplied. The servants all knew, moreover, that any attempt at looting would be at once reported, and cost them their places. The food for our own table was daily brought by relays of coolies from home.

The natives of Monghyr, knowing the law very well and the great risk which Europeans, particularly officials, run by cheating or oppressing them, take very good care of them-

selves; and do not hesitate for a moment to appeal to the courts of law when they consider themselves aggrieved. A great reaction has taken place of late years respecting the relative positions of masters and servants in India. On the whole the change is beneficial to the country; but if there is any tyranny now, it is, without doubt, on the part of the servants, who, if they are bad, can cheat and lie with almost absolute impunity.

During the four years I was at Monghyr no case occurred of any European ill-treating a native; had such a case occurred the European would have been summoned the same day before the magistrate. Indeed, now-a-days, if a native is abused, he demands heavy damages in the civil court. I do not remember hearing a native called a nigger in my presence; but this probably would be considered a good cause of action for damages by many Bengalees.

Many of the evils which disgraced the first years of English rule in India have now died out. The natives are no longer like sheep in company with wolves, and can guard their own interests very well against individual wrong. Among other instances which might be given

to illustrate this fact, I may mention that during twenty years' service in Bengal I never had a hint of any kind thrown out inquiring if a bribe would be acceptable, although among themselves the natives practice bribery and corruption from the time they leave their mothers' breasts. Even as Civil and Sessions Judge, and during three years when I was on special duty for taking up land for public purposes, with unlimited money under my absolute control, there was never any attempt on the part of either rich or poor to influence my decision with a bribe. I used to ride alone among the villages which I had to buy with a cheque-book in my pocket, and, having settled what I considered a fair price for the land or houses, write out a cheque, which I cashed at the door of my tent next day. The natives liked this plan, and, having no middle-man to treat with, would always accept my terms at once. I carried about large sums of money with me, but was never robbed; for, when everyone had retired to rest, before going to sleep I tied a string round my wrist and connected it with all four corners of the tent, so that anyone coming in at night must have aroused me immediately.

But, although I never had the opportunity of accepting a bribe or present of any kind for myself, I accepted a present for my wife the day before I left Monghyr. The owner of the house I lived in was the chief Mahomedan in the district; and he amused himself by paying me a visit nearly every day in order to see how his house was getting on. I found the place in ruins when first I came to Monghyr, abandoned to owls and bats above, whilst a colony of semi-wild cats had taken up their quarters in the rooms below. It was an old-fashioned, rambling place; Mahomedans and Europeans in former days had added to it, and, could I only have removed it to England, antiquaries would have revelled in its dark passages, ancient arches, and deep wells of solid masonry, where, so tradition says, the ladies of the harem were thrown when they offended. I took a fancy to the place in consequence of the unrivalled view from the verandah. The Ganges could be seen close by to the north, and, on a very clear day, as I lay in bed, I could see the whole range of the Himalayas. Then, on the other hand, we overlooked the Government gardens; and, three miles distant, the sacred hill of Pirpahar was

clearly visible; whilst close beside the house the horse-tail leaves of casuarina trees sighed with every passing breeze like the distant murmur of the sea. I agreed to repair the house at a cost of three hundred pounds, and repay myself from the rent at ninety-six pounds a year. I shot twenty-three cats, and should have killed more, only a very vicious cobra, which had a family in an unused drain close by in the garden, killed one of those remaining and frightened the rest away. Then I had to wage desperate war against the long-eared bats, which looked upon the drawing-room as their own. Directly the lamps were lighted in they came, whirling round and round in a sort of mystic dance, flapping their leathery wings, over a foot in length, and clutching every now and then at my wife's and children's hair. I won the victory in the end, however, as I had done already with the cats. I disabled them with a carriage whip, and killed them as they lay upon the ground. The musk shrews, which abounded also, were not so easily disposed of; but I caught two hundred in company with several brown rats. A few scorpions and centipedes, which I subsequently caught, left the place

fairly free from pests; and, when the house was ready, the owner was never tired of looking at it and singing my praises as a benefactor to his race. A most worthy gentleman my landlord was, with a pedigree longer than my arm; and the morning before I left he appeared in order to wish me good-bye. Beneath his ample flowing garment he carried what appeared to be a silver vase or flagon; and a thought passed through my head that this must be a presentation cup subscribed for by the thousands of Mahomedans that owed him allegiance. I asked him what he had got there, as, with an air of much importance, he placed the mysterious article upon the table. He explained that he had determined to present a spittoon, of pewter, to my wife; the exact counterpart to one in constant use by his wife whilst chewing betel; for this, he said, would recall him to our minds when the seas divided us.

Although the custom of receiving presents from natives has happily come to an end, the idea that Indian civilians must necessarily be rich unhappily remains.* The truth is that there are fewer rich men in the Indian Civil Service

* See Speeches on India by the Right Hon. John Bright.

than in almost any other service in the world. I have little doubt that if accurate statistics were taken, it would be found that not five per cent. of retired civilians can afford to keep a carriage and pair in England, or give their daughters a thousand pounds when they are married. Tradesmen in respectable London streets have a better chance of acquiring wealth than members of the Indian Civil Service; and, if honour is looked for in an Indian career, nine-tenths of civilians can only hope to return to England and remain in utter obscurity, though for many years they may successfully have administered the affairs of no inconsiderable portion of the human race, and governed the country which supplies England with half its wealth, and gives it the foremost place among European nations. The pensions which civilians receive keep them certainly above want; but, in several instances, the amount which individuals have subscribed towards their pension would have purchased an equal annuity in any London insurance office.

CHAPTER IV.

Madhuban, or the Honeywood.—Land brought under cultivation by the Santhals.—A Day's Jungle-fowl shooting in the Kharakpoor Hills.—Plants, Birds, and Insects.—Archery in the Shade.—Ants and Kites.—Split-headed Mantis.—Scarcity of large Birds in Europe when compared with India.—Kites-nesting near the Houses in Monghyr.—Nests in Casuarina Trees.—Cuckoos.—Starting a Museum.—The Domestic Pig of India.—The Monoculus, Scorpions.—Snakes in Monghyr.—The Snakes' Barber.—Snake by Post.—Coiners and their Dupes.

MADHUBAN, or the Honeywood, where my tents are pitched, a few years ago was covered with dense jungle, the home of deer and pea-fowl, where even the hunter dared not remain after dark, for fear of a tiger or leopard springing on him unawares. But the railroad now runs near, and advancing population has cut down the jungle and ploughed up the soil, so that my tents are now surrounded by villages and smiling

fields, where the virgin soil yields abundant crops of poppy, tobacco, indigo, castor-oil, and other plants which contribute to the varied wants of mankind. The beasts and feathered game have retired to the adjacent hills, which, extending for many miles, afford them shelter or repose.

The land has been brought under cultivation by the Santhals, who have thriven wonderfully under English rule, and always appear fat and happy. During the recent famine there was little fear of the Santhal starving. He danced and sang notwithstanding the high prices which appalled his Hindoo neighbour. When rice fails he falls back on jungle products, roots, honey, rats, and snakes, washed down by whisky made from the mahwa flowers, which fall thickly from the trees on all sides. Although European opinion is much divided in Monghyr regarding the merits of the Santhals, they have always appeared to me a simple, merry race, and free as the birds among their native hills. They have their weak points like other mortals, certainly; and not the least culpable of these is their love of poaching. Ever prowling about with guns or bows and arrows, all is fish that

comes to their net, in season or out of season alike. Woe to the pea-fowl or jungle-hen that the Santhal finds sitting on her eggs. It would never enter his head to pass her by; she is knocked on the head without remorse, and the eggs borne home in triumph.

In consequence of this poaching propensity, little sport is generally to be had near a Santhal village, although the jungle may appear most favourable; and the Santhals themselves are admirable beaters, and will turn out every living thing from a tiger to a wren.

It was accordingly with no great hope of sport that yesterday I accepted an invitation from the Manjhi, or chief Santhal, here, to have a day's jungle-fowl shooting under his guidance in the hills. He assured me that, as he expected I should come, the woods had not been disturbed for months; and he had sent round among the neighbouring villages to collect the most wary beaters. And, indeed, I knew the Manjhi would do his best to show me sport, for he has been employed by me during the past year to collect specimens of natural history in the only partially explored hills of Kharakpoor. I paid him fifty shillings for five live tupaias,

thinking they were scarce and difficult to procure; but a shilling a head would have been ample remuneration, as these animals are easily captured in the holes of trees, where they live or take refuge when disturbed. Although the Santhals have no objection to take my money, I think they have long ago determined that I am *non compos mentis*; for I paid them for a new species of stick insect of the genus Bacillus more than ten times its weight in silver; and for a rare Mantis at least its weight in gold. They stare as they receive the money, and I hear them laughing in the distance as I move away. It is useless to try and explain the interest which some people take in such things; it would only make matters worse: and on one occasion, when, after a good long chase in a stagnant pool of water among the hills, I captured a huge water-bug (*Belostoma indica*), and a pair of beetles with backs coloured like chessboards, and gravely tied them up in my handkerchief, their astonishment could no longer be suppressed, but found vent in an uproarious peal of laughter, which re-echoed from the rocks and frightened an old hyena, which had been watching our entrance on his domain with

much dissatisfaction. I accepted the invitation to shoot, however, on the express stipulation that I was to take my time and not appear upon the scene until the sun was well above the horizon; for the pleasantest hour out of the twenty-four in camp is to be passed lying warm in bed a little before sunrise, the thermometer below 50°, and a cloudless sky outside. I lie and listen to the birds. The grey partridge is the first to call, and he is answered by a rival far away among the hills. Then the golden oriole opens his eye and whistles, and a dove, in the tree under which my tent is pitched; is cooing so softly as to remind me of the wood-pigeons on a spring morning at home. But sentiment, however satisfactory it may be in other countries, appears out of place in India; so I will pass over the time until I found myself in the midst of a circle of savages on one of the most picturesque spots in India.

The place where we had assembled is the only natural pass into the hills for miles. On either hand was a precipice overhung with trees and creepers, which find sufficient earth and moisture among the rocks. Whilst the Manjhi is giving directions to his men,—some of whom are taking

the baskets which contain a change of clothes and my breakfast from my bamboo cart,—I amused myself by examining the plants around. At the stream by my feet is the beautiful *Osbeckia chinensis*, now in flower, which I have not seen before. By its side is the gaudy Rattle (*Crotolaria quinquefolia*), allied to the *C. juncea*, so generally cultivated, and which is called the hemp of India. Overhead is the marking-nut tree (*Semicarpus anacadium*), which the Santhals beg me not to interfere with, as the acrid sap injures the hands of those who touch it; but the serpent-like creeper, *Bauhinia Vahlii*, having no such fear, holds it in deadly embrace, and soon will kill it. The Mahout has gathered some of the marking nuts to administer as a cordial to his elephant, which has come to assist in beating the jungle. It appears that some convulsion of nature has split the precipice under which we are standing, making room for a mountain stream to find its way over the rocks into the plain below. The action of the water in course of ages has worn away the metamorphic rocks until they resemble steps leading to some giant's castle. During the rainy season, after heavy rain, and only then,

the water comes tumbling down the steps, forming a picturesque cascade; but now the stream is like a thread, and will remain so until July or August. I thought, as I looked at the rocks, which even steel will hardly touch, of the countless monsoons which must have blown over these hills in order to wear the steps down to their present shape.

The Santhals, who, impatient at the delay caused by my collecting flowers, were longing to be at work, now commenced clambering up the pass, twenty going on one side in Indian file, and twenty on the other, until they had reached a convenient distance. Here, forming into line, they set up an unearthly yell, and began beating towards me. It is always rather nervous work in the Kharakpoor hills, particularly when one has only shot in one's gun, standing over some narrow pass perfectly ignorant of what is coming. The Manjhi told me that a tiger had lately carried off five men close by; but added that he was a cowardly brute, and would only attack persons solitary and unprotected. When any game is started the beaters redouble their shouts, calling out what they have seen; but, talking an uncouth

jargon when excited, I am seldom much the wiser whether they herald a tiger or a wren. As they approach, the jungle-fowl came flying over my head, and I brought down four without moving from my position.

As the beaters approach, they roll great stones down the hill side, which come crashing through the jungle and drive out every living thing. Owls and night-jars, which only went to roost when morning dawned, fly past, with magpies and rollers, doves and orioles. The Santhal at my side touches my shoulder, and points eagerly into the jungle ahead at something which looks very like a leopard, but out jumps a large civet-cat, which I let go by. It is followed by a tupaia, which is also allowed to escape.

By this time the beat is finished, and the Santhals come clambering down the giant steps again, forming a picture which would do very well for the drop scene of a theatre, or a tableau representing primeval man, or the world before the Flood.

After trying other beats with varied success, and bagging three brace of partridges and a wild cat, I adjourned to a wide-spreading banyan tree, where my servants had preceded me, to

breakfast. During camp life in the cool season I breakfast every morning out of doors; and this meal is far more pleasant there than when eaten in the house. I carry about with me an apparatus for boiling water, which I bought at Rome five years ago, and find it invaluable for making tea or coffee at ten minutes' notice. The Santhals all sit round, and although they pretend not to be looking on, it is evident that they are intensely interested in my way of eating; and I can realise the feelings of the lions during meal-time at the Zoological Gardens in Regent's Park.

After breakfast, as no human being within hail will condescend to eat what I have left, I feed the crows, the kites, and ants, which are never absent from my meals.

The ant family must be the most numerous in the world. I have often tried to find a spot in Monghyr not frequented by ants, but never succeeded. They may be seen in every house, on every tree, hunting everywhere; and, although destroyed by thousands, others soon appear to take the places of the slain. They milk the aphides in Monghyr as other members of the family do in England; and many of them

appear to have no other food than what their cows can yield.

But ants are not the only insects which inhabit the place where I am sitting. The tree is alive with insects, chiefly beautiful tree bugs, which feed upon its sap. There is the scarlet flying-bug (*Dystercus cingulatus*), the most common of all its order, and which commits vast havock on most of the trees and shrubs throughout the district. Here, also, is the emerald-necked beetle (*Sternocera nitidicollis*), and its beautiful ally the burnished copper beetle (*Sternocera Dinardi*). These beetles are the most beautiful which the Monghyr hills produce, and I have never found them on the plains. Butterflies do not show much variety in Monghyr; but I caught here the chesnut moth (*Danais chrysippus*), which, during the rainy season, is found in every grove and bush.

The Mantidæ are well represented in the dry Kharakpoor hills. The African genus Schizocephala, or split-head, is not uncommon; for one or two specimens were generally included in the collection which my hunters brought in during the rainy season. Their egg-cases were also brought in as great curiosities; and the

natives were never weary of examining their wonderful structure under a microscope.

Schizocephala bicornis, Lin. (male).

As the Santhals expressed themselves tired with their morning's work, I proposed a little archery in the shade, expecting to see feats similar to those of Locksley, described in Ivanhoe; for the Santhals carry bows and arrows directly they are weaned. On this occasion the less which is said about their skill

the better. Although I stuck up a good-sized target at forty yards, the archers only succeeded in hitting it once in about ten times; and I am sure they would have had no chance whatever of gaining a prize at any archery meeting in England. But, still, a poisoned arrow is a terrible weapon in their hands. The hunter sits up in a tree or watches behind a rock until the tiger or the bear he wishes to kill comes within a few yards, and, if the first shot fails, it does not alarm the animal, or any others which may be near, like the loud report of a gun.

By the time the archery had ended, and I had paid to every man a penny, the February sun was approaching the horizon; so, mounting my pony, I rode back to camp.

The scarcity of large birds in Europe never fails to attract the attention of Englishmen homeward bound after a residence in India; and it is always a subject for regret, as the presence of birds adds very greatly to the beauty of the landscape. The flight of an eagle, or rock owl, as it passes from one mountain top to another, must always be viewed with interest; and, watching the flocks of snow-white egrets and cranes returning from their feeding grounds in

the evening, gives pleasure even to the apathetic Hindoos.

I encouraged kites to build in the trees around my house at Monghyr; and, when a nest of termites took to flight, they would assemble in force to join in the repast with crows, rollers, shrikes, swallows, and, occasionally, bats. And in April last, wishing to get some specimens of their eggs, one of my servants brought me fifty, which he had collected from the trees around, taking, according to my orders, only one or two eggs from each nest.

Often, as my servants were preparing my specimens or skins, the kites would swoop down and take pieces of flesh from the ground close by, or even snatch the pieces out of their hands; but they never did this when I was the operator, although both they and the crows would readily catch pieces of meat which I threw up to them.

The crows were great protectors to an aviary which I had made in my house; for a pair of shikra hawks (*Micronisus badius*) would often come and sit in a casuarina tree close by watching the birds in the cage with longing eyes, and, occasionally, when the coast was clear, swoop down at them; but they never could remain

there long, for the crows, which regarded my garden as their own property, persecuted them so vigorously that they were always forced to retreat. My servants urged me to shoot the hawks; but as they only frightened my birds I contented myself with driving them away whenever I saw them.

During the breeding season the casuarina trees were full of nests; for I put up earthen vessels for the accommodation of any birds which cared to have them, and an hour seldom passed after they were adjusted before a newly-married couple arrived, parakeets, rollers (*Coracias indica*), and mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*), and pied starlings. Indeed, so popular did these rent free, unfurnished habitations become, that the tenant had always a series of pitched battles before an entrance could be effected. Squirrels also joined in the contest, and were generally successful against all birds except the parakeets, whose sharp powerful beaks they did not care to encounter. Hoopoes often came to examine the earthen vessels; but could not be induced to build in them, although a pair had a nest and reared their young ones in a hole of the jail wall close to the shed where several hundred

prisoners were at work all day. These beautiful birds were quite common in Monghyr, and half a dozen might be counted at one time on my lawn, whilst, during the pairing season, their call, which gives them their Hindustani name, *Hood-hood*, was heard at dawn incessantly from the surrounding trees.

One of my assistants, who had been brought up in London, was irritated beyond measure by the early call of the Monghyr birds; and, like Caligula, he wished they all had but one neck which he could chop off. The chief irritants were the green barbet, or coppersmith (*Megalaima viridis*), the tailor-bird, the koel (*Eudynamys orientalis*), and the hawk-cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*), which heralds the hot weather by screaming in every garden and grove. Nor does his cry cease with the day, and most people who have resided in India can recall this cuckoo's cry as they lay awake in April at midnight waging a desperate war with mosquitoes whilst the thermometer stood at 90°.

Soon after my arrival at Monghyr my natural history specimens increased so fast that I resolved, with the sanction of the Government, to establish a public museum.

Directly it was known that I intended to establish a museum, a miscellaneous description of articles came pouring in from all sides. Some were sent by my friends, who, possessing idols, coins, skins, geological specimens, autographs, tigers' and boars' skulls or skins, thought this a good opportunity for getting rid of them. Other things, such as petitions or songs in Persian character, neatly written inside narrow-necked bottles, were, with much ceremony, presented, in the hope that the ingenious donor might be brought into notice or even secure an appointment; but most of the contributions were brought from direct pecuniary motives, in the hope that I would at once purchase them at an exorbitant price.

When I went out for a walk in the morning I found candidates for my patronage waiting my arrival at every turn. One man held in his arms a live porpoise, which he had just caught in the Ganges; another had a female scorpion (now in the British Museum) in a jar, with its young family clinging to its back and tail. A third triumphantly produced a mygale spider, which he had turned out of its hole whilst splitting up a log for firewood. Others had

moths, beetles, snakes, and fish in sufficient quantities to fill a sack.

By the time I returned home I had as many specimens as I could manage, and I amused myself on holidays by setting them up and preserving them, much to the astonishment of the natives, who could not understand my partiality to such things. I gave, indeed, strict orders to my servants that visitors were not to be introduced into my taxidermy sanctum; but, notwithstanding my precautions, I was surprised on one occasion by a Raja in the act of stuffing a mygale; and on another, by a Mahomedan high priest, in the act of dissecting a python, which had arrived by rail in a beer-barrel. I satisfied my servants as far as I could by explaining that the strange things which I brought home possessed a scientific interest; but they advised my making over my specimens to the civil surgeon, who, according to their ideas, was the proper person to handle such things.

Professor Rolleston, who was writing an account of the domestic pig of pre-historic times, asked me to send him some skulls of the domestic Indian pig; so I sent for an outcaste

Dome, the swine-herd of Bengal, and told him when he feasted his friends on roast pig to put aside the skulls for me. These appeared in due time, and the way in which my valet turned up his eyes when he saw them, I shall never forget. He positively refused to have anything to say to them, or even to touch the tin case to which they were consigned. I subsequently saw these skulls in the Oxford Museum, and Professor Rolleston gave me as much information about them and their history, as though he had known the animals to which they belonged from youth. He said :—"It is noteworthy that one of the skulls belongs to a very old sow. In these days, as in the days when Juvenal spoke of another eastern country as a place where—

Vetus indulget senibus clementia porcis,

it is a rare thing for a domestic pig to be allowed among western nations to live long enough to wear down its third molars."

"It is noteworthy also that with the worn-down molars of this aged sow were correlated abscesses on both sides of the lower jaw, much as might have been the case in ill-fed human beings with similar worn-down teeth."

It will be remembered that Gilbert White in his seventy-fifth letter on the Natural History of Selborne, mentions a sow which was allowed to live to her seventeenth year, when she showed some tokens of age by the decay of her teeth, and the decline of her fertility.

But my servants perplexity in tinning up pigs' skulls was in no way diminished when I consigned a rat (*Nesokia indica*) to a bottle of spirit for Professor Rolleston. They thought, whatever I might say to the contrary, that I intended to eat it, as they had seen me eat peaches preserved in brandy, or sardines in oil. The low-caste Mushirs eat rats and ham, and drink spirit, so as Christians are ranked among the low-castes, my servants formed their opinion of the rat's ultimate destination accordingly.

The fame of my museum was not confined to Monghyr, but contributors sprang up all over the country, and the following is one of the first letters which I received :—

"Dear Sir,

"Hearing this morning that a sow had produced a young elephant, I had the credulity to make inquiries, and now send you this *lusus naturæ* in the state in which it

was brought to me, as you may like to see it. I have put the thing into an earthen pot with some native spirit, which I trust will keep it in a state of preservation until it reaches you.

"I remain,
"Yours truly,
H. O. King,
Manager of the Maharaja's Estates at Kharakpoor.

This proved to be a specimen of what Mr. Frank Buckland calls the monoculus, or elephant pig, a picture precisely similar to this specimen was figured in "Land and Water," Oct. 26, 1871.

When I went to my court a crowd had generally assembled to exhibit something or other. Scorpions were favourite subjects, with thread tied to their tails to prevent their running away. One man brought a fine male in spirit, which had turned a beautiful rosy hue, and neither he nor anyone else could account for the colour, until a sage with a long grey beard stepped forward and explained that the rosy hue was caused by the scorpion having ejected the poison from his tail during his death struggles. On asking him how he knew this, he told us that he was a naturalist in a humble way, and had made scorpions his particular

study. Here was a discovery! but on examining my specimen at home I found the colour was merely caused by the dye coming off a piece of red silk which had been tied to the scorpion's tail. When I met the naturalist in a humble way next day, he laughed very heartily when I accused him of trying to take me in. "Savants," he said, "are usually credulous, and so far as he could see one explanation of so trivial a subject was as good as another."

Snakes were brought to my office in thousands. The municipality gave a reward of four annas, or sixpence each, for venomous snakes, and a penny for harmless kinds. In order that I might secure anything rare, I had them all passed in review before me, and as the natives declare that almost every snake is venomous, I was able to prevent the municipality paying too much. Out of some six thousand specimens which I saw however, at least four thousand were cobras, or the equally deadly Karait (*Bungarus cæruleus*), the rest were all harmless, with the exception of a single specimen of the Banded Bungarus, and two specimens of Russell's viper.

As the municipal limits only extended over

two square miles, anyone conversant with arithmetic may calculate the number of snakes to the acre which Monghyr contained, and the chances whether you had a cobra residing under your bed, or chair as you sat at dinner.

Considering the vast number of snakes, the wonder is that any person escapes being bitten, and when we know that their bite is certain death, and that in Bengal alone a vast army of men, women, and children, are yearly bitten and die, it is difficult to answer satisfactorily a question once put to me by a Mahomedan lawyer: "For what good purpose were cobras created?" Fortunately during the cold season, when Europeans move about the country in camp, snakes appear to hybernate, at all events they are seldom seen; and Dr. Watt, the Professor of Botany at Hoogly, told me that he kept a cobra for six weeks without air or food under the glass of an air-pump, and when released it turned up as lively as ever.

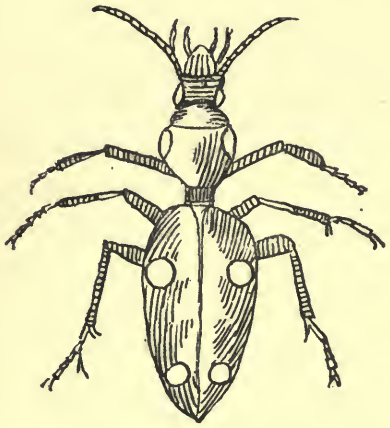
The milk snake (*Ptyas mucosas*), although harmless, has a bad name at Monghyr, on account of its alleged propensity for sucking cows, goats, and occasionally women. One young woman was brought to me who declared

that she had been seized by a Ptyas, and the milk sucked from her breast. She said that her relations advised her to wean at once the infant which she had with her at the time; and the neighbours when they heard what had happened, so far from regarding her with repugnance, considered she had been especially favoured by a god in disguise, and they respected her accordingly. During my examination of the woman, my tailor and coachman attended at my request as assessors; but their verdict was that the woman was telling lies, and indeed from the shape of the snake's teeth and tongue, sucking milk from any animal would, I think, be a physical impossibility. Not wishing to hurt the woman's feelings, I suggested that the supposed god must have appeared to her in a dream, and performed the operation which she had narrated, during her sleep. This, however, she indignantly denied, and declared that she had heard of several similar instances. I failed, however, to get any further reliable evidence on the subject, although I offered a good reward to anyone who should satisfactorily confirm her statement.

The Black-banded snake (*Ferania Sieboldii*), so rarely met with in museums, is common in Monghyr; not a week passed but specimens were brought to me. Unfortunately they were invariably so much knocked about that they were quite useless as specimens, though I preserved several in their mutilated state.

A pretty little snake, called the Sakra (*Lycodon aulicus*), is also common in Monghyr; and in consequence probably of its resemblance to its cousin the Karait, is regarded with much fear by the natives. Although its jaws contained no poison fangs, it is said that occasionally nervous persons die from fright when bitten by it. In March last my barber informed me that his wife had been bitten that morning by one of these snakes, which had passed the night under her pillow. I told him to run home at once, and tell the woman that there was no danger; but the barber, who took the matter very coolly, said there would be plenty of time for communicating my information after he had finished his rounds, particularly as a number of neighbours and cunning men, who understood charms for snake-bites, had been called in.

As the Sakra has obtained a bad name from its resemblance to the poisonous Karait, so the *Chabinda*, or six-spotted beetle (*Anthia sexguttata*), has obtained for itself an unenviable



The Chabinda, or Snake's Barber (*Anthia sexguttata*).

notoriety at Monghyr, in consequence of its living in holes of banks, and houses frequented by snakes. It is called "the snake's barber," and its bite is declared to be so poisonous, that anyone bitten by it dies in a few hours. Several deaths of children from the attacks of this insect were reported to me by the police, and the only way I could account for them was that the child was bitten by a cobra, and its

parents on searching about had discovered a Chabinda near the place pointed out by the child, whilst the real culprit had escaped. I received a couple of these beetles, and a live snake, on one occasion by post. They arrived whilst I was sitting in court trying a case, and not knowing what the parcel contained, I told one of the orderlies to open it. With the curiosity peculiar to natives, a crowd pressed round to see what was going on; but there was a general cry of horror when the contents became known. They thought at first it was an ingenious attempt to assassinate me; but when they saw me take the snake and beetles in my hand, they changed their minds, and thought it was a deliberate act of suicide, after the fashion of Cleopatra.

The case I was trying at the time contributed some specimens to my museum, and illustrated at once the ingenuity of Indian sharpers, and the simplicity of the country folk. Four men in the garb of religious mendicants travelled about the country, going from village to village with a stock of counterfeit rupees, which they prepared in unfrequented places as the demand required. Their plan was to separate and visit

the various villages which lay along their line of route. When they saw a likely-looking clown they went up to him and said their day's begging had been so successful, and the coppers their wallet contained were so inconveniently heavy, that they wished to change them for silver. On being asked what amount of copper the wallet contained, the supposed simple mendicant declared that he could not count, but he believed they formed about a rupee's worth; at all events he would gladly take a rupee for the lot.

On this the clown counted the money, and finding several coppers in excess produced a rupee, which the rogue took, and with simple legerdemain exchanged it for one of his counterfeit coins. This he pretended to examine attentively as the one which had been tendered, and handing it over to the dupe said he could not part with his coppers for such a rupee as that, because he had doubts about it being sterling coin of the realm. In this way the rogues secured a considerable amount of money daily, until they were apprehended, and it came out in evidence that on more than one occasion the simple country folk allowed a dozen

good coins in succession to be exchanged for bad ones, although the deception might be at once discovered even by a blind man, and should have secured the rogues a sound caning on the spot.

CHAPTER V.

The Kharakpoor hills.—Recent Changes in the surrounding Country.—The Irrigation Works.—Picnic on the Lake.—Plants on the Banks of the Lake.—Santhal Villages.—Beautiful Scenery.—Birds and Fish.—Bhim-band.—Hot Springs.—Trees in the Vicinity.—A brave Hermit.—The Pleasures of an Ascetic Life.

TWENTY years ago anyone standing on the summit of the hills adjoining Kharakpoor, would have been surrounded by a dense and almost impenetrable forest, where, at sunrise peacocks and jungle-fowl were heard calling to their mates, and where in the evening tigers, leopards, and bears, came to drink the water of the little river Mun, which, rising at the hot springs in the recesses of the hills, flowed, forming many beautiful cascades by the way, between the hills, until it reached the plains near Kharakpoor. The past twenty years, however, have effected greater changes in these

hills than did the twenty centuries which had gone before. Directly the railway whistle was heard on the adjoining loop-line of the East India Railway, the wild animals retired to happier hunting grounds; the peacocks and jungle-fowl followed, and soon the forest, resounding with the woodman's axe, gave way to fields of wheat, cotton, sessamum, and other fertile crops, such as may only be seen in India on virgin soil.

Nor are these the only changes which have taken place. The little river Mun can no longer sing as it goes along,—

> "For men may come and men may go,
> But I flow on for ever."

because the narrow gorge through which it passed on its way to Kharakpoor has been closed, and its collected waters form one of the most lovely lakes in the world, rivalling, by no mere figure of speech, the renowned lakes of Killarney.

This great engineering work, which has been carried out at a cost of some lakhs of rupees, debited to the Darbhanga Raj, sets drought through the surrounding country at defiance, and will enable the happy rayat to raise a

succession of crops all the year round. As the lake is as yet in its infancy, being only a few months old, the number of European visitors who have seen its beauties may be counted on the fingers; and on January 1, the first picnic took place upon its banks, which assuredly, before long, will resound with the voices of pleasure-parties, and tourists.

Our party consisted of myself and my wife, Major Waller, the District Superintendent of Police, and Mrs. Waller, the Assistant Magistrate Mr. Primrose, and Mr. King, the officer in charge of the Kharakpoor estate. Our intention being to combine business with pleasure, and explore the lake, following the course of the stream as far as possible among the hills.

On our arrival at the lake, we found a jolly-boat, manned by four rowers, waiting for us; and, whilst its prow was being decked with a garland of flowers, in order, as the boatmen assured us, to procure a propitious voyage, we examined the trees and plants which grew on the neighbouring hill-side down to the waters edge. Here we found beautiful blue and pink Barlerias growing side by side with the gaudy yellow wood-cotton flower (*Hibiscus vitifolius*),

and with them the pink Amaranthus, with seed-vessels like miniature Burmese boxes, and a pale blue Eranthemum, which quite deserves a place in the flower-garden. Towering above these were *Wrightia tinctoria*, with its curious follicles or pods, like miniature horse-collars. The Indian Olax, which my companions at once pronounced to be an oak, because the fruit closely resembles an acorn; the Jungle Crab (*Zizyphus xylopyra*), and the spreading *Woodfordia floribunda*, which may be called a country cousin of the cultivated pomegranate. Over these was creeping in beautiful profusion the Silver Creeper (*Porana paniculata*), known to Europeans as "the bride," but by a curious perversion of terms, the "boori," or old woman, by the natives, who seem unable to distinguish what is sweet and fair, from what is old and ugly.

We were assisted into the boat by a fine soldierly-looking Sikh orderly, belonging to the Court of Wards, who asked us what chance there was of war with Russia, adding that directly the war-note sounded, we might count on him to bring one man and horse into the field. He confided to us that he had a natural taste

for fighting, and that fighting in company with Englishmen was the summit of his ambition.

Directly the boat started, the beauties of the lake began to unfold themselves. On one side range after range of hills arose, until they were crowned by the table-topped Marak, over one thousand five hundred feet high, which makes a most conspicuous landmark; whilst on the other hand were abrupt precipices, with gigantic boulders piled together, forming a fine eyrie to a horned rock owl, which, unaccustomed to visitors in his highland home, greeted us, as long as we remained in sight, with cries of "Who? Who?"

Twenty minutes pull brought us to what formerly was known as the Fakir's Cave. This was a small chamber in the overhanging rocks, some thirty feet above the stream, where a mendicant, for reasons best known to himself, had taken up his abode for many years, until—so the simple people say—a goddess, in the shape of a tiger, claimed him for her own. The great attraction to the place was a huge sacred tree, a Terminalia, said to be the habitation of the goddess; and the woodmen had built her a temple on the other side of the

stream. Both the temple and the cave are now deep beneath the lake, and the goddess appears to have assumed the form of a parrakeet, for we saw numbers of these birds building their nests in the cavities of the sacred tree, now devoid of leaves, and up to its waste in water. The lake is narrow here, as the cliffs on either side close up, only to stretch out again further on, and a drum beaten, or a gun fired, re-echoes again and again among the rocks, until the sound dies away among the distant hills.

The place is full of interest, particularly to those who can compare it now with what it was a year ago.

A little further on last year, I visited a cascade, known by the name of the Fountain of the Seven Sisters, and I found monkeys clambering over the rocks forty feet above my head. These rocks now appear beneath the water as we sit above them in the boat, and the cascade has disappeared for ever.

A similar fate has befallen the "Laughing Fountain" higher up, where the water was said to be the sweetest in all the country round; and a huge banyan with its numerous slender roots and trunks close by standing out of the

water, affords a fine look out to an Egyptian vulture and Indian snake-bird (*Plotus melanogaster*), which have taken possession of it.

Where the banks are low, and there is any level land, clearings have been made, and the Santhal rayats came running up to see us as we passed, and hearing the sound of the drum, showed a strong disposition to commence a dance in honour of our arrival. Virgil's line, which commences "*O fortunati nimium*," may be translated, in order to apply to them, "O, happy race! if you would only keep from drink." They hold their lands at very low rates, and with ordinary care, they might soon become rich, but they are an improvident people, and appear doomed to extinction. We have now been rowing for two hours, and have come nearly seven miles. The stream begins to narrow up, and the coxswain finds difficulty in avoiding the trunks of the trees standing in the water, so, choosing a clear place, where the banks are not too high to land, we direct the boat to shore, and, as it strikes the bushes overhanging the water, we disturb three otters, which greet us with terrified stare, and plunge

into the water. On the beat of our drum Santhals peep out of the bushes, like the Sherwood foresters, when the Black Knight sounded his horn; and under the promise of largesse, their services are retained to collect wood for a fire, and to serve as guides to those of our party who wish to explore the woods, and collect plants and ferns.

We felt as we sat at breakfast under a large frankincense tree, that if this, the first picnic which has taken place on the Kharakpoor lake were a fair sample of Indian life, there would be very little to grumble at in India, either as regards the scenery or the climate.

I was never tired of collecting specimens of natural history among the hills, for prizes turned up at almost every step, and my companions were always so glad to hear about the plants and birds and insects which we saw around, that I sometimes doubted the wisdom of the English system of education, which leaves so little time for the study of natural history.

Over our heads as we sat at breakfast a colony of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters (*Merops philippensis*) were breakfasting on flies. These birds

are hardly distinguishable when on the wing from the *Merops apiaster* of Europe, and which is so unfavourably spoken of in the fourth Georgic. They form large colonies in Monghyr, on the banks of the Ganges, where I often found their eggs. The holes which they inhabit are frequently attacked by bull-frogs, which eat the young birds or eggs. The old birds, too, are also killed when the frogs can catch them, and my attention was once called to a huge bull-frog with a Mynah (*Acridotheres tristis*) struggling in its mouth. The pretty little Green Bee-eater (*Merops viridis*) is also present. Several are sitting without any fear on a bush close by, and darting down on mosquitoes, which are hastening by scores from the water to annoy us. These birds also breed in colonies near Monghyr. I have found their eggs in holes of banks hardly a foot high, and which appear like the habitations of rats rather than of birds.

If the beauty of flowers is due to natural selection, that creative power has not been very active here, for gaudy flowers are conspicuous by their absence. An honourable exception, however, may be made of what is locally

known as the Nepal lilac, a member of the *Cinchona* family (*Hamiltonia suaveolens*), whose fragrant flowers scent the air around. Another exception is the Myrtle-flowered Styrax (*Symplocos spicata*), which called forth much admiration from our party, as it grew in great luxuriance by the water-side. The capsules of yams hung clustering overhead, and reminded us of the Bryony of English hedgerows. I sent a large collection of the various wild yams, which the poor foresters eat in Monghyr, to the Economic Museum in Calcutta. They were collected by Major Waller, the District Superintendent of Police, during his cold weather tour among the hills.

The water's edge, where our boat is anchored, is yellow with the Indian ranunculus, the only member of the butter-cup family which I have noticed in Monghyr; and the gum-arabic tree close by is also covered with yellow threads, which look as though a net had been thrown over it to preserve the precious gum from the attacks of birds.

The net is the silken parasite, *Cassyta filiformis*, which always attracts the attention of travellers in Monghyr; and hundreds of orange-

tipped butterflies (*Ixias mariannæ*) are hovering over it.

As we are making our way through the bushes after breakfast, in search of birds and plants, our guide screamed out "Sái!" "Sái!"* and a porcupine dashed by, which Mr. Primrose knocked over with a ball. The Santhal gave a yell of delight, and begged the body for a feast; so after extracting a few quills as a momento of the day, we made the Santhal happy, and Prisoner-of-Chillon-like in the evening when we let him go,—

"He regained his freedom with a sai."

But not only are flowers scarce in the primeval forests, but birds and beasts are rare. We saw a solitary crested hawk-eagle perched on a leafless tree, and a few parakeets flew screaming by. The lake has not yet been discovered by the myriads of wild fowl which pass over Monghyr; but we saw a flamingo, evidently a straggler, cooling his long legs in the water which washed the shore.

A few cormorants have taken up their quarters here, attracted by the fish, and the white-

* Hindustani for porcupine.

breasted kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), the pied kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), and the little blue kingfisher (*Alcedo bengalensis*), breed in great security on the steep banks along the stream. The water will doubtless soon be full of fish, and as the stream before it was dammed up, was the Home of the far famed Mahseer (*Barbus tor*). These should now attain gigantic size, and afford good sport to the angler. There is also a curious little fish, which may be called the river remora (*Discognathus lamta*), for nature has provided it with a sucker beneath its jaws, which enables it to attach itself to the rocks and resist the terrific current to which it was exposed during the rainy season, when the Mun was only a mountain stream. Now, in the still waters of the lake, the sucker is no longer required, and according to the evolution theory it will disappear. Here, too, is the home of a goby (*G. giuris*), whose ventral fins also form a disc, and enable it to fasten itself to rocks, and resist the force of sudden floods when they come down from the hills. At least a dozen species of carp are common, and a beaked gar-fish (*Belone cancila*), locally known as the *cowal*. Unfortunately a pair of crocodiles have taken

up their abode in the lake, and will make sad havoc among the fish. But reptiles are scarce among the hills. The only snake we saw was the yellow-collared green snake (*Tropidonotus plumbicolor*). Although perfectly harmless, it is declared to be very venomous by the natives, who say it flies. Two or three species of skinks we found running about the rocks; and these, though quite harmless, have a bad name among the natives.

By the time we had collected specimens of all the plants we could find, and the artist of the party had filled his book with sketches, the sun threw long shadows from the distant purple hills, and we saw the horned rock-owl flying across the lake, previous to commencing his hunting for the night. Night-jars also crept out of the brushwood, where they had been taking their siesta in the shade. The painted spur-fowls, thinking the coast was clear, were coming down to drink, and as we passed they witnessed the termination of the first picnic on the beautiful lake at Kharakpoor.

Next day we visited Bhim-band, some twenty miles up the river Mun, where several hot springs rise out of the rocks side by side, with a spring of

pure cold water, which supplies most of the water to the lake. The temperature of the hot springs is 140°, similar to the Sitakund fountain at Monghyr. But Bhim-band is not a place of pilgrimage now, as it was in the old days, being deep in the recesses of the jungle, and anyone who visits it, must take a guide to show the way through the unfrequented forest paths. A thakur, or holy man, who holds the land around, has evidently an eye for the picturesque, and will not allow the forest trees about his hermitage to be cut. We found some splendid specimens of the banyan, the silk-cotton tree (*Bombax*), the mahwa (*Bassea latifolia*), and a bignonia with long pods (*Stereospermum suaveolens*), which we had not seen before. It is a paradise for botanists, and the huge basket which we carried was soon full with specimens of at least fifty species of forest trees. Here we also saw, flying overhead with a speed which the eye can hardly follow, the graceful crested swift (*Dendrochelidon coronatus*), only to be found in the deep recesses of the hills; and the wild cry of hornbills was heard on all sides. These birds, which, we were told, breed in the hollow trees around, get very fat

on the numerous berries in the woods at this season of the year; and they share the wild plums with the few bears which have hitherto escaped affording the Government reward for their skins to the hunters, who are ever on the watch.

The tigers, for which the neighbourhood of the hot springs was famed only a few years back, have now nearly all disappeared; but not long ago our friend, the thakur, was cutting wood near his home when a tiger sprang out, seized his servant who was with him, and was carrying him off to the jungle, when the thakur attacked the tiger with his walking-stick, and so astonished the brute that he dropped his victim unhurt, and made off into the woods. We asked this brave and holy man before we left, what he knew of the outside world; but he appeared never to have heard of the Empress of India, or her royal son, and his visit to India. He declared that all knowledge of rulers, beyond myself, who paid him a yearly visit, was a blank. Here was a contented man, an Indian Rasselas, living among the Kharakpoor hills; and more than one of our party, as we wished the holy man good-bye, and retraced our steps

towards home and work, declared such a life was to be envied. And on asking him, the thakur said, and probably truly, that he had no desire to change places with us, even if he could, notwithstanding that he viewed us in the light of the kings of the country. His rude ideas on the subject are elegantly expressed in Goldsmith's, or rather Johnson's lines,—

> The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
> Luke's iron crown, and Damiens bed of steel,
> To men remote from power but rarely known,
> Leave virtue, faith, and conscience all our own.

CHAPTER VI.

Expedition to the Marak hill.—Running with the Natives.—The Goosander.—Heavy dew.—Oil Seeds grown by the Santhals.—A bad Shot.—Killing a Tiger.—Ducks and Drakes on the Pool of a Waterfall.—Monkeys.—The Serpent Creeper.—Curious Grasshoppers, and Locusts.—Want of faith in English Medicine on the part of the Natives.—Useless fruit in the Kharakpoor hills.—Attractive Seeds.—Marak Spiders.—A Bird-killing Spider.—Beautiful View.—Flowering Bamboos.

The most enjoyable time of my life in Monghyr was spent in exploring the Kharakpoor hills, and a few days after my expedition to Bhimband I determined to pay a visit to Marak, a table-topped hill one thousand five hundred feet high, and the highest point in the range. Although this hill is visible from the station of Monghyr, no European in the district had been there. It was a difficult place to get at. Eight miles of pathless forest lay between it

and Kharakpoor, where my tents were pitched; and as the Santhals in the neighbourhood have killed nearly all the game, it afforded little attraction to the sportsman. I proposed, therefore, taking my gun with me, more for show than for use; but I was anxious to see if any new plants, or other specimens of natural history, were procurable.

On the morning fixed for my expedition, my Santhal guides arrived an hour before sunrise in front of my tent; and when I got out of bed, the thermometer which hung outside marked 38°. My guides had collected together all the straw and wood which they could find lying about, and having made a fire were sitting huddled together shivering over it in their scanty clothing. So in order to make their blood circulate, as well as mine, I offered a rupee to anyone who could overtake me in the first quarter of a mile of our journey. They seemed all confident of getting the reward, and were in high spirits at the proposed race; but it ended, as I knew it would, in not a man coming near me, for the natives are indifferent runners. Seikhs, and up-country men, and Goorkhas, often tried to beat me in running and

jumping; but it was of no use, I was never beaten by a native.

Half an hour's walking brought us to the Kharakpoor lake, which we had to cross, and on stepping into the boat I saw a bird upon the water which I had never seen before in Monghyr. As it rose on our approach, I knocked it over dead; and it proved to be a fine specimen of the gosander (*Mergus castor*), a bird very rarely seen in the plains of India. It was at once consigned to the large basket which I always took with me in my excursions for collecting plants; and on reaching my camp in the evening I set it up for my museum.

The sun was rising when we reached the opposite side of the lake, where our forest walk began, and the dew was so thick upon the grass, that had I not put on a pair of water-proof boots and leggings, I should have got wet through. The bushes of the honey-creeper (*Combretum decandrum*), which covered the bank where we landed with its creamy floral leaves, threw off such quantities of water as we pushed through them that the cloth the Santhals wore got wringing wet, and even I, who cunningly came last, did not escape; but the sun soon

dried us all, and before noon the entire country was dry.

The first part of our journey took us through undulating forest, dotted here and there with Santhal villages, covered with blue flax, and yellow mustard, which in the distance look like gay carpets spread upon the ground. The sessamum, which is a favourite crop among the hills, was nearly ripe; and the little Starflower (*Verbesina sativa*), only found among the hills, was in bloom. This plant is grown for the oil its seed supplies, and it gives a better yield than its giant cousin, the sunflower, which in the Government gardens at Monghyr attains a circumference of five feet.

We had hardly reached the confines of the Santhal villages, when we saw a large Sambur stag standing in a field of sessamum, and I had time to slip a couple of ball-cartridges into my gun before he noticed us. But I was too eager to shoot straight; and although I fired both barrels, away went the stag unhurt, whilst the Santhals stood staring at each other, and at me, as though they thought than anyone who could miss such a mark as that, would miss a haystack, or a barn-door. I consoled myself,

however, by the reflection that I have allowed very few of the large wild animals which I have seen in India to escape. One of the most successful shots ever made was at a tiger shortly after my arrival in India. I was in the Rungpoor district at the time, and was sitting in my court one sultry afternoon trying a man for beating his wife, when a villager came running up, saying that a tiger had been seen to enter a small coppice within a mile of where we sat. I at once sent notice to my chief, George Macdonald, who had killed hundreds of tigers, and had six elephants always ready for a hunt. My court was at once closed for the day, and in less than half an hour we started, followed by an immense crowd of men, women, and children, together with all my clerks, the plaintiff, defendant, and witnesses, all equally anxious to see the fun.

We soon arrived at the coppice, and we found the whole village had turned out, and were awaiting our arrival. An old woman, bent double with age, was picking up sticks by the coppice side; and when we asked her if she had seen the tiger, she merely gave a grunt and pointed out the place where the tiger lay con-

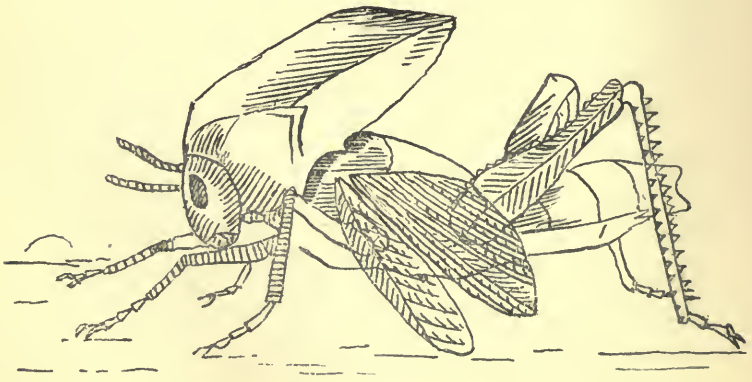
cealed, only a few yards from where she stood. I thought the old lady must be tired of life, and hoped the brute would end her miserable existence; but my mahout explained that she knew herself to be too old and thin to be worth the tiger's notice. However that might be, we had hardly entered the jungle when the elephants began trumpeting, and out bounded a magnificent tiger, going as hard as he could in the direction of a crowd of unarmed people, who were quite paralyzed with terror. In another moment he would have rolled some of them over, when a bullet from my gun entered his ear, and went crashing through the centre of his brain, as accurately as though I had measured the cavity with a pair of compasses. The crowd then raised a shout, which made the welkin ring again, and formed a scene of wild excitement not easily forgotten.

The Santhals had not recovered from their disappointment which my bad shot at the stag had occasioned, until we reached a spot, half way to the Marak hill, where we found a secluded water-fall suitable as a place for breakfast. A troop of monkeys had been breakfasting there before us on wild figs and berries, which

were hanging in thick festoons over the rocks adjacent to the waterfall; but they moved off at our approach, climbing up the creepers, and sat watching us from a neighbouring Feather-tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*). But this proved a poor retreat, for the water had worn the stones below our feet into pebbles so smooth and round, that no one could resist throwing them at the monkeys, and when these had disappeared, I amused myself whilst the water was boiling for my tea in making ducks and drakes across the pool at the foot of the cascade, and watching the pebbles split against the hard quartzite rocks beyond. I subsequently passed a Sunday there in company with the civil surgeon, and two young competition-wallas, and they spent the whole afternoon, most pleasantly they said, in making ducks and drakes upon the pool.

Here I picked up what seemed to be the soles of a pair of English shoes, and was wondering who could possibly have thrown away his shoes in so remote a spot when I found they were the pods of the Serpent-creeper (*Bauhinia Vahlii*). This gigantic pea, which abounds in the Monghyr jungles, is most destructive to the forest trees, for it holds them

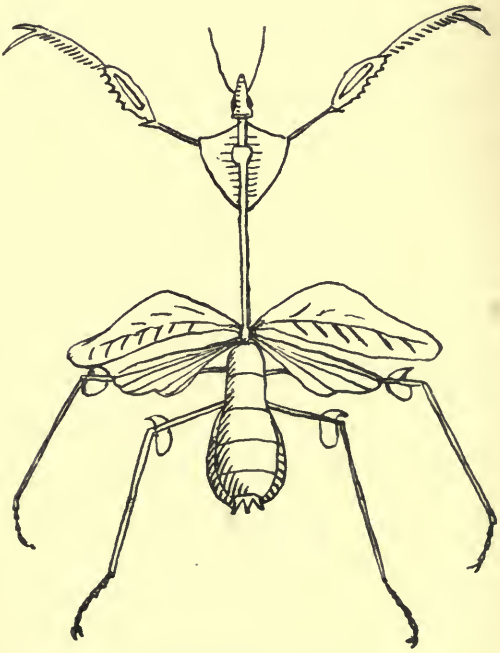
in its deadly embrace; and many a time I have breakfasted beneath its arbours in the shade formed by the leaves growing so thickly on its twining trunk and branches, that even the mid-day sun is unable to effect an entrance. These creepers when in bloom in April add greatly to the beauty of the landscape, though no good forester should allow them to remain. But forest conservancy is unknown to the apathetic natives, and only the more zealous Europeans who have charge of the Court of Wards, are beginning to trim the woods, and give the most useful timber trees a chance of getting free from their deadly enemies the serpent-creeper, the mistletoe, and the loranthus parasites.



The Helmet Locust (*Tetratodis Monticollis*).

At 10 o'clock we started off again, and now the most interesting part of the journey began, for the country was quite new to me. We soon got into high grass where we could hardly see our hands before us; and the drum which we carried with us had to be beaten incessantly to prevent our party separating. Here I caught specimens of the extraordinary Helmet Locust (*Tetratodis monticollis*), which is one of the wonders of the insect kingdom. These dry metamorphic hills develop the order *authoptera*, and in a single day's hunting I have procured more than twenty different species, many of them exhibiting the most fantastic forms. This is the home of the Mauve-frilled Mantis (*Empusa gongylodes*), which loses all its bright colouring when dead. One of the engineers working on the Kharakpoor Irrigation Works sent me two in a cage, thinking they were birds. They flew on to a boquet of flowers which his wife was holding in her hand. The Saw-frilled Mantis (*Rhombodera serricollis*) flew occasionally on my dining-table, attracted by the light; and the Peacock Mantis (*Harpax urbana*) was generally to be found watching like an ogre for any stray beetle or fly which might come within its

reach. Then there was the Travellers' Guide (*Mantis superstitiosa*), which is supposed to



The Mauve-frilled Mantis (*Empusa gongylodes*).

show the way to wanderers and children, who have lost their way.

One of the most common as well as the most beautiful of the order is the painted locust (*Pœcilocera picta*), which feeds on the swallow

worts (*Calotropis gigantea*), which grow abundantly by every road side.

The bottle of mahwa spirit which I had with me was soon full of insects, and the baskets which my servants carried were full of plants. No one can walk among the Kharakpoor hills during the cold season without noticing the pods of the Tree-bignonia (*Calosanthes indica*); which hang like huge sacrificial knives from the leafless branches. The native quack doctors may be seen picking them in order to make up medicines for their patients, preferring these and other simples to the drugs supplied from England. It is curious how little faith the natives have in English medicines, and, perhaps, with some show of reason. My servants always used to note, for instance, that I, who held all medicine in abhorrence, and was never known to buy a bottle of quinine, was quite exempt from fever, whilst those who spent large sums on this nauseous drug had almost constant fever. My servants shared with me the suspicion that the efficacy of quinine is a popular delusion which will explode in due time and share the fate of serpents' tongues and mandrake leaves of past generations.

In walking among the Kharakpoor hills, no one can fail to remark how few of the fruits and berries around have any value, either as food for men or animals. The Dogbanes abound, particularly the *Hollarrhenas*, and *Wrightia tinctoria*; but their conspicuous seeds are more or less poisonous. Then, of the great pea family, the seeds of the magnificent *Butea frondosa*, to be seen on every side, are useless; and the Indian laburnam (*Cassia fistula*), with its pods like walking sticks, are not eaten even by birds. Perhaps the most conspicuous of all the seeds which are found among the hills are the well-known scarlet ratis (*Abrus precatorius*), a climbing pea, which must resemble Dead Sea apples to the birds; for though so bright and tempting, they carry death within. They have, however, afforded me many a pleasant hour collecting them, in order to send home as curiosities or for adorning village churches when holly berries fail.

An hour's hard walking brought us to the foot of the Marak hill, which is covered with forest, though from the far distance it appears quite barren. We all sat down to rest for a few minutes, before commencing the

ascent, under a Terminalia, which supplies the black myrabolans of commerce, and a pair of amaduvads were building their nest in one of the branches. These birds are caught by thousands in Monghyr, and exposed for sale under the name of Rubys. Here also I saw a female Black-backed Woodpecker (*Chrysocolaptes geonsis*), with yellow crest, a rare bird in Monghyr, for I had never noticed it before. As we were resting beneath the tree the Santhals asked me if I had any particular reason for paying the Marak hill a visit; because they said they had never known any European visit it before. I caused no little amusement and surprise by telling them that I had come chiefly to search for spiders; for I had read in Gosse's "Curiosities of Natural History," that a bird-killing spider inhabits this hill. The Santhals looked at each other as though they thought I was either a fool or mad; but they were too good courtiers to give expression to their thoughts; they only said what was equivalent to "*Chacun à son goût*," and that so long as I paid them well they would assist me in any eccentric pursuit I chose. Our conversation reminded me of the time when H. R. H. the

Duke of Edinburgh was expected in my district for a day's pig-sticking some years ago. A Mahomedan gentleman who heard of the rumoured visit came to inquire at my house; and I shall never forget his face when I told him what H. R. H. would come for, if he came at all.

The geological formation at our feet is a hard metamorphic rock containing much iron ore; but half way up the hill a layer of asbestos appears, which, where exposed to the air, is much decomposed, and the natives use it for whitewashing their houses. The summit of the hill, which we reached after half-an-hour's hard climbing and creeping beneath the brushwood, is crowned with a deep layer of volcanic laterite, which does not appear in any other part of the district. How did it get there?

It did not require much searching to find the spiders we were looking for, as their silken ropes were seen stretching from tree to tree. The Santhals soon entered into the spirit of the chase, for they are hunters, or rather poachers, from their birth. A shout claiming my promised reward soon brought us to a tree where a long-legged spinner had his stronghold,—a

large handsome spider (*Nephila chrysogaster*), but not large enough to overpower the smallest bird.

The only spider in Monghyr which could kill a lizard or a bird is the Crab spider, a Mygale, which was found by me in hollow forest trees, and which I believe had never been previously noticed in Bengal. I put a female in the scales and found she turned an ounce. This spider is too bulky, apparently, to spin a web; but she sits watching like an ogress in a hole which forms its den within a hollow tree, and pounces out on any small lizard or young bird which may be passing near.

Prongs of a Mygale Spider, found in Monghyr.

The forest trees on the top of the Marak hill stand so thick together that we had to cut down several trees before we could see the plains below; but when this was done we were rewarded by a view which equalled anything I have seen in the lower ranges of the Himalayas. The Kharakpoor lake appeared like a duckpond in the distance; and the Ganges, two miles

broad, like a silver thread. It would make a fine sanatarium, and anyone who wishes for repose might live here for years with hardly any fear of being disturbed except by the forest beasts and birds. Deer had been lately there, for we saw the fruit of the hog plum (*Spondias mangifera*), which they had been gnawing; and porcupines' quills were lying on the ground. Here, too, we saw what is rarely seen in Monghyr, a large clump of bamboos in flower. In all my wanderings among the hills I had never met with the flower before, so I cut off as many as a man could carry to exhibit to my friends in camp. The "male" bamboo (*Dendrocalamus strictus*) is common here, and I was constantly receiving orders for a bundle fit for making hog spears from members of the Tent Club in Bengal.

The only birds which we found on the summit of this table hill were the White-winged Green Bulbul (*Ixora typhia*), which is more like a Tomtit in voice and habits than the short-legged Thrushes, with which it is associated by naturalists, and the Chestnut Nut-hatch (*Sitta castaneoventris*), which, being unaccustomed to see men in so remote a jungle, took very

little notice of us as it scaled the trees close by.

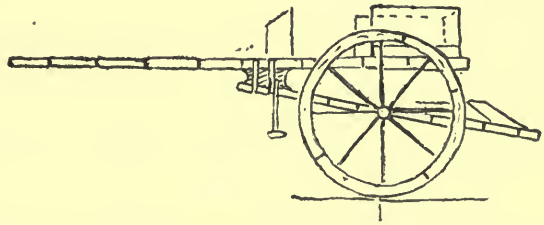
By the time our baskets and pockets were full of specimens, the sun warned us that it was time to be off; so, sounding our drum to collect the Santhals together, we retraced our steps to camp.

CHAPTER VII.

The Bamboo Cart.—Roads in Monghyr.—Fertile appearance of the Country in February.—Jackals feasting in Graves.—Government Estate reclaimed from the Ganges.—Poverty of the People.—Severe Bit.—Cruelty of the Natives.—Quail.—A Primary School in Monghyr.—Swarm of caterpillars.—Litigation caused by the Ganges changing its course.—Confidence of the Natives in the Courts of Law.—Toddy Palms; Insects found on them.—Wasp killing a Snake.—Trees by the road side.—Birds.—Ignorance of the Natives regarding the outside World.—Their knowledge of Simples.—The Molanaggar Monastery.—Curious Scene there.—The Bench at Sheikhpura.—A Native Gentleman's House and Garden.—Early Reminiscences of an Indian Court.

On the 1st February 1877 I left Monghyr at daybreak to visit the ancient town of Sheikhpura, forty miles distant, at the western extremity of the district; and to sit with a bench of Honorary Native Magistrates, who had recently been appointed by Government.

My cart, of which an illustration is given, cost four pounds, new; and was well adapted to the Monghyr roads. It carried myself, my servant, a basket of food and clothes, and my gun. It could, if necessary, be lifted over a ravine, or carried across rivers in any country boat; and, besides these recommendations, if it got out of repair, which very seldom was the case, any village carpenter or smith could mend it. It had no iron springs, but the seat, resting on the pliable bamboo, which formed a continuation of the shaft, prevented any uneasy motion or jolting.



My Bamboo Cart. From an engraving in "Land and Water."

When I first came to Monghyr the district roads were in a very bad state, but the road-cess, introduced by Sir George Campbell in 1873, gave us about ten thousand pounds to keep them in repair. The native carters used

to bless my method of driving over the roads instead of inspecting them from inside a palkee or from an elephant's back. Every jolt of my bamboo cart was noted as a black mark against the supervisor, and each person in charge of any public thoroughfare had a lithographed notice pasted in his note-book, to the effect that he would be expected to resign his appointment if ever I was compelled to alight from my cart in consequence of the badness of the road. The result of the periodical inspections was magical; and the poor native carters, who classed bad roads among the evil decrees of fate, bowed down to the ground whenever they met me driving.

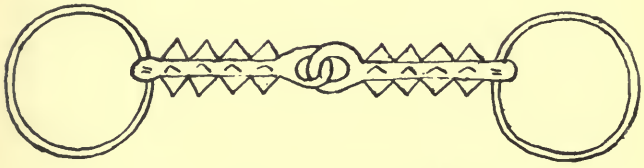
The road to Sheikhpura, after leaving Monghyr, led over a vast low-lying alluvial plain, inundated by the Ganges in July, August, and September, during the rainy season, and celebrated for the mirages which appear after the waters subside. On the 1st of February, as I drove along, the fields were covered with wheat, just coming into ear; peas, barley, flax, and gram, which affords both food for horses and for man. In many of the fields these crops grow mixed together after the

Belgium system of assoilments; and, indeed, considering that a fresh alluvial deposit is brought down by the overflowing river year by year, this system of agriculture gives a better yield than if only one kind of grain were sown in each separate field. It renders, however, the wheat unfitted for the European markets, as inferior grains get mixed with it. On a single plain, which stretches on either side, as far as the eye can reach, ten or a dozen villages lie scattered a mile or two miles apart. The head of each family holds on an average four acres of land, for which he pays two pounds ten, and the wonder is, how the various tenants can identify their plots when the flood recedes. There are no walls, hedges, or ditches there to serve as landmarks; but the ryots seem guided to the boundary of their fields by some peculiar instinct similar to that which guides the bee to its hive or the swallow to its nest. The country at this season of the year looks green and fertile, the Indian Skylark is singing over head, and as I am thinking that, after all, India is not a bad place to live in, my eye is attracted by a jackal walking leisurely out of a hole which he has dug during the night in a

Mussulman's grave close to the road side. He is licking his lips after his morning meal on the dead body, and his wife, fat and sleek, is sitting on the grave outside. They make no signs of moving off until, by my orders, a stone is thrown at them by my Mussulman groom, who views the scene with indifference, although the grave may be that of his father or his wife.

At 8 o'clock I arrived at one of the Government estates, which during the past thirty years has risen out of the Ganges, and I found about a thousand of the tenants, who, hearing that I should pass that way, had come out to see me, bringing the best quadruped which the estate afforded for me to ride over part of the estate and see how the crops were getting on. This was a sorry-looking beast, which had commenced a life of toil when it was yet a colt; for its hocks knocked together at every step it took. It was barely twelve hands high. A sack thrown across its back did duty for a saddle, whilst a rope did service for a bridle. In these poor peasants' eyes, however, their pony passed muster well enough, as they seldom see anything much better with which to compare it; and I mounted amid the admiration of the

spectators, who disputed among themselves as to whom should have the honour of carrying my gun.



Horse's Bit, used by the people of Monghyr.

The bit which was in the pony's mouth is now in the Kensington Museum, and anyone using it in London would at once be summoned before the magistrate by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I asked the owner why he put such a thing in the animal's mouth, and he replied that it was the custom. The pony had been bred on the estate, and its mother and grandmother had been guided by similar bits, so they were used to it. Any amount of these bits are obtainable in the bazaar, for they are in general use; but it is to be hoped that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals will be able soon to establish a branch agency in Monghyr.

The cruelty of the natives is like that of children, the result of thoughtlessness rather than

of pleasure in giving pain. My cook, until the fact was brought to my notice, used to kill turkeys for my table by cutting out their tongues; and the so-called ortolans of India, wagtails, short-toed larks (*Calendrella brachydactyla*), and pipits, were brought round to the Europeans' houses with their wings twisted in a manner which must have caused intense pain to the poor birds, if they feel pain as human beings do. I sent round a circular to the residents, begging them not to encourage such cruelty; and whenever I met men carrying birds in such fashion I gave the poor things their liberty. A Mahomedan, when he wings a bird, never thinks of putting it out of its misery; he twists up its wings or sews up its eyes in order to cut its throat when required. The natives often sent me live birds with their wings or legs broken, and stared when I declined the gift and read them a lecture on cruelty.

This Government estate is a favourite feeding ground for quail, as it is surrounded on all sides by water. Cats, snakes, mongooses, foxes, and other vermin, are rare; and the birds are allowed to sleep at night in peace. Jhau

bushes (*Tamarix dioica*), which afford a pleasant retreat during the mid-day heat, are scattered over the island, and here the quails grow very fat, and refuse to fly until almost trodden on; indeed, one flew up and knocked off my hat in the act of rising in the air. A Pied Harrier is hunting with noiseless owl-like wings over the crops; and it has just caught a small lizard, probably *Hemidactylus maculatus*, and a pair of Marsh Harriers (*Circus æruginosus*) follow us, hoping to fall in with any bird which may be wounded by my shot. The fields are full of quail; but it is rather hard on the owners of the crops to trample down the corn in order to turn out the game, so I contented myself by missing several birds as they flew up near our path and killing two, which, however, were nearly carried away by the attendant hawks.

One of the numerous schools which Government supports upon the estate was awaiting our arrival under a large Euphorbia (*Trewia nudiflora*), and the schoolmaster, who passes rich on four pounds ten a year, has brought forward every available youth that he can catch, in order that I may write a favourable report in the

Visitors' book, which he presses into my hand before either of the boys had begun to read. The pride of the village is pushed forward to read a few extracts from the *Prem Sagar*, or Ocean of Love, whilst the assembled crowd listen with wrapt attention; and when this is finished, an empty bottle, which once contained Worcester sauce, is exhibited, with my name and praises displayed in Hindi characters inside. This ingenious work must have cost the student many hours of labour; and it is the very highest art to which village hopes ever attain.

The tree under which we were standing bears only female flowers; and as a stamen-bearing tree of the same species is nowhere within sight, I subsequently paid it a visit from curiosity, and found that it was covered with fertile fruit. A large number of cream-coloured butterflies (*Catopsilia catilla*) were flying around, and the caterpillars, apparently of this species, were swarming among the crops. The damage which they did must have been immense. The villagers had dug trenches in the sandy soil, which were full of them; there must have been millions struggling about together, unable to clamber up the friable sides of the trenches into which

they had tumbled in their attempt to migrate from one field to another. The natives say these pests are born spontaneously in cloudy weather; and smiled incredulously when I attempted to explain how their views are wrong.

After some further conversation with the villagers on the subject of their crops and their debts, for most of them are in debt to the village banker, the sun warned me that I could stay no longer, so mounting the queer-hocked pony again, I rode back to my bamboo cart, which was waiting for me on the road.

The natives have a proverb, which says,—

Zamín, zanána, zar,
Tín kazaya ká ghar.

This means "land, woman, and gold, are the chief causes of strife"; but nothing since the world began, can have caused such endless litigation as these churs or islands of the Ganges. Hundreds of acres of the sandy alluvial soil are washed away from one place, and reappear at another; and everyone who can put in a claim for the newly-formed land of course does so. The difficulty in deciding to whom the land belongs, lies in the fact that

bordering the Ganges there are seldom fixed landmarks by which surveyors can determine the boundaries of estates. The consequence is that the money paid in litigation, which has occurred regarding churs since the English came to India, would go far to pay off the National Debt, and must be far more than the value of all the islands put together. The estates under my charge, however, were a source of much revenue to Government. They consisted of about fifty thousand acres, and contained thousands of tenants, all of whom held their land at a moderate rent, which in every instance I fixed myself after an inspection of the land. I gave in to the ryot as far as possible; because having sat on the bench myself, I knew the uncertainty of the law in case I should have recourse to the civil courts in order to uphold the Government rights.

It is always a source of satisfaction to see the confidence which the natives have in the courts of law in India; they have no hesitation whatever in entering into litigation with Europeans before English judges; and although I was the chief executive officer in the district,

they did not hesitate to bring suits against me in connection with the Government estates under my charge before the judge, whenever they considered I had wronged them in any way. We won most of our cases, however, because we compromised every claim, which after a searching investigation was found to be a just one.

The Government puts aside three per cent. of the profits of its estates for purposes of improvement; and one of the most difficult problems was to devise some scheme on which to spend the money. The rule was to spend the money put aside on the improvement of the estate from which the money was derived; but the principal sources of the funded money were the huge islands in the Ganges, which sank to the bottom of the river during the monsoon only to reappear when the floods abated. It was, therefore, difficult to improve such land with either roads, embankments, tanks, for storing water, or for wells. We could have made them fast enough, but they equally fast would have been washed away; so I spent a little money in attempting to improve the intellectual status of the people by establishing

schools, and left the other money untouched, although continually urged to spend it.

After passing the low-lying Government estate, and wishing the tenants good-bye, the road ran through higher ground abounding in toddy palms (*Borassus flabelliformum*), which supply a revenue of about five thousand pounds yearly to the Government. The peduncles of the male flowers are cut with a sharp knife, and the sap, or toddy, falls into an earthen pot, which is tied up to receive it. It is quite worth while to stop and watch the Parsees, who hold a monopoly of the trade, scale the trees. Up they go like caterpillars on a cabbage-stalk, practice makes them perfect, and they form a tribe of steeple-jacks. Many of the trees are eighty to one hundred feet high, and a robust young man will climb thirty or forty trees during the day. The Date tree, which abounds, is also tapped for its sweet sap; the bark is pared, and entomologists will do well to examine the trees, for many insects are attracted by the sap. On a single tree I have captured twenty species, of which the most abundant was the belted wasp (*Vespa cincta*). This is a ravenous insect, and as a rule carnivorous in his meals. I saw at

Monghyr what probably no other European has seen, a wasp of this species attack a full grown snake single-handed, come off victorious, and having cut the snake in two with his formidable jaws, carry off the pieces to be enjoyed at leisure. The snake was the Tillia Sámp, well known to naturalists as the Burrowing Snake, or Blind Aconitia (*Typhlops braminus*). I found the Parsees useful in getting eggs for me, as many birds breed in the palms, and though as a rule they choose the female trees, which the Parsees do not disturb much during the breeding season, they do not object to the Parsees' visits, when he only comes to collect his toddy pots. As I drove along I came to a tree close to the road where a pair of eagles had their nest. I marked the tree, and told a Parsee in the next village to bring me an egg if he could find one; but I heard no more about it, although I offered a handsome price for an egg, never having met with the nest of this species (*Aquila pennata*) before. But palms are not the only trees along the road. Orchards of guavas, and custard-apples, and mangos, appear on every side, whilst here and there among the villagers'

houses may be seen the Black Plum (*Eugenia jambolana*), the Yellow Plum (*Zizyphus jujuba*), the Bael (*Ægle marmelos*), and several species of figs.

At 9 o'clock I took advantage of the shade afforded by a huge banyan tree close to the road side, and alighted for breakfast.

I had often noticed this tree before, as it is one of the few large specimens of the *Ficus indica* in Monghyr. There are innumerable ordinary trees, but no care is taken to preserve the aerial roots from the attacks of the village goats, which nibble them directly they come within reach. I begged the head men of villages to enclose these trees, and, by preserving the downward roots, make them grand trees for future ages. But, although the head men were full of promises, they seldom troubled themselves further in the matter after my back was turned.

Whilst the water was boiling in the shade for tea, I amused myself by watching the birds eating little red figs over head. The Indian cuckoo (*Eudynamis indica*) of course was there; but, although so fond of figs, he began life in a crow's nest, fed by his foster parents,

on carrion, fish, flesh, or fruits, whichever came first to hand.

Near him sits his cousin, the Hawk Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*), and in a few weeks, on the first approach of the hot weather, the cousins will sit on neighbouring trees and make the woods and gardens re-echo night and day with their cries.

Higher up in the tree are several green barbets, with foreheads of metallic crimson. Their note, "tok, tok, tok," is one of the most familiar Indian country sounds heard about this time, when the birds are pairing in every grove and garden. I have often found their nests, containing five white eggs, in the holes of trees, demonstrating their connection with the family of woodpeckers.

Besides the birds which are breakfasting on figs, there are several kites and crows, which are patiently waiting until my meal is finished. They know my groom, though hungry, would rather die than eat my leavings, so they watch, ready to pounce down on all I throw away. Ants also have assembled in force, and have already cleared the ground of the falling crumbs.

When my breakfast was finished, and the

kites, crows, and ants had fought over what was left, I saw a village school, headed by the master, coming for examination from a neighbouring village, and as notice of my arrival had spread to the villagers, they assembled to hear their children examined. The book which the children had been reading was Æsop's Fables, and, after a few questions, answered satisfactorily, about the Fox and the Grapes, and the Dog in the Manger, I turned to general subjects, and asked them who was the sovereign of the country. The boys exchanged glances, and looked at their master, but no one spoke until a boy suggested "John Company"*; and, hearing this was wrong, one of the villagers stepped forward and explained they were a simple folk, knowing little of courts and kings; that they knew no king but me, and, not only was I their king, but their father and mother also. A banker who was present could give no information as to where gold or silver came from. He had never heard of Australia or California, and excused himself by saying that, so long as he got the money, he troubled his

* The Indian soubriquet for the Honourable East India Company.

head very little regarding where it came from.

The shopkeeper who supplied the villagers with Manchester cotton cloths had never heard of America, and could not trace his wares beyond Calcutta, and he listened to my history of the calico he wore with a languid interest, which caused him to yawn more than once before I finished. As he himself explained, he knew or cared nothing for the world beyond the horizon visible from his village.

The chief drawback to primary education in Monghyr is the variety and difficulty of the current alphabets. The Mussulman has the Persian or Arabic character, which runs from right to left. The pious Hindoo delights in the Sanskrit character, which runs from left to right. The trader cares alone to learn Mahajani. The rustic likes Kaithi; and the ambitious youth learns the Roman character, as he considers it a stepping-stone to a Government appointment and to fame. It is difficult to imagine how any real progress in literature is to be made until the Roman character is adopted. At present ingenuous youth can hardly read fluently by the time he should have

left school; and his literature is pretty closely confined to the "Tales of Fifty Demons," and "The Ocean of Love."

But if the simple villagers can give me very little information regarding the outside world, they can identify all the plants which I have collected on the road. Almost every plant, they say, has its use, real or pretended. The trees and crops around supply them with their daily bread; the various mallows and fibrous grasses supply them with ropes and string; and when they are sick they gather simples from the neighbouring hedge or thicket.

The club moss (*Lycopodium*) which I exhibit first, a gray-bearded sage explains, is good for making up quarrels between man and wife, if the latter only place a sprig upon her husband's pillow. The second plant, the Mexican foxglove (*Martynia diandra*), with its clawed seeds, a villager declared to be a capital safeguard against tigers or leopards, which will refuse to enter a field where the plant is growing, for fear of the seeds sticking in their coats. It would be unwise, however, to trust to this alleged safeguard, as a leopard killed by the Prince of Wales in India

is said to have had one of these seeds sticking in its coat.

The mechanism of these seeds is well worth examination. Not only has it sharp claws to hook on any passing animal, but below the hooks are short spikes, which give the seed a firmer grip and keep it in its place. Surely there is design in this.

Another curious seed is that of the Bean Caper (*Tribulus terrestris*), which is not uncommon in Monghyr. It is armed with strong spines, so formidable that, according to the natives, not only tigers, but even elephants refuse to enter a field where this plant grows. The use of these spines is clearly to aid dissemination by sticking into animals' feet, though they do not appear to get so firm a grip on their victim as the American foxglove, which, thanks to its hooks, has since its introduction into Monghyr, become extremely common all over the district.

Hooked Seed of the Mexican Foxglove.

Spiked Seed of the Bean Caper.

The third specimen exhibited, the Holy Sage (*Ocymum villosum*), is said to be so feared by snakes that if a plant is grown in front of a man's door he may sleep in peace, for no cobra will disturb his slumbers. It would, however, be unwise to place much faith on this alleged safeguard, for General Murray, who tried the experiment shortly afterwards, killed one of the largest cobras ever seen in Monghyr, in the very room over which the sacred sage kept guard.

As I was examining the school a beggar woman came asking alms. She and her husband were on a pilgrimage to Benares, but their cash had fallen short upon the road. I offered her any reasonable price she liked to name for the heavy anklets on her feet, which she declared were enhanced in value from the fact of her having worn them for ten years without once taking them off. I had never seen such extraordinary ornaments before, and, after some hesitation, they were taken off, and, amid the merriment of the crowd, placed upon my cart. I weighed them when I got home, and found they turned eleven pounds. The price I paid for them was evidently remunerative, for

some days afterwards the same woman came to my house at Monghyr and sold me all the other ornaments she wore, ear-rings, nose-rings, and bracelets. These are with me now, and illustrate the amount of discomfort which women, whether born in India or England, will undergo in order to adorn themselves and be in the fashion.

At Molanaggar, which lay along my line of route, there is a monastery, endowed with many acres, whose rent, after certain allowances to the present head of the establishment, and other descendants of the original abbot, are intended to feed the neighbouring poor. The claimants to the allowances, however, under British rule, have multiplied so fast that at present there are nearly two hundred persons who claim a share; and among them were certain discontented spirits, who complained to me that the head of the establishment misapplied the revenues, which are paid direct to him, keeping for himself what should be given to the poor. Hearing that I should pass the monastery this day, the Abbot determined that I should judge for myself between him and his detractors. I passed

many mendicants on the road, all *en route* to Molanagger; and as I was entering the last village before arrival at the monastery, a herd of cows on their way to the fields took fright at my strange dress and my bamboo cart, and, turning round, galloped along the road at a tremendous pace, upsetting everything which came in their way. I saw a confused mass of animals and human beings struggling on the ground, so, jumping down from my cart, I ran up to see if anyone was hurt. I found an old man, with a little boy in his arms, lying on his back upon the ground, whilst two pretty girls, a good deal cut about, were wringing their hands and crying, "Alas! our brother! alas! our brother! Oh, Sir, you have killed him." I soon saw, however, that the whole party was much more frightened than hurt; so I knelt down and whispered the magic word "*buksheesh*" in the old man's ear. This had the desired effect, for the old man at once got up, picked up his child, and, sitting on the bank of the road side, demanded how much I intended to bestow. I gave him all the coin I had; but he said, if I wished to make him a happy and contented man for life, I would, on

arrival at the monastery, direct the Abbot to give him half a pound of rice daily during the few years left to him on earth. I was able, subsequently, to grant this request, and the old gentleman made no secret of his readiness to be knocked down by runaway cattle daily on similar terms.

On approaching the monastery a confused noise was heard like the roaring of the sea, and this gradually grew louder at my approach, until in the distance I saw a dense mass of people swaying to and fro, struggling to get at some baskets of maize which were being distributed by the Abbot's attendants. I never saw such a scene of indescribable confusion before. At least three-fourths of the grain was thrown upon the ground, or on the top of those who had fallen, and could not regain their feet. On my approach the opposite party rushed up to me shouting at the top of their voices, that this display was all *fudge*, and only got up for my inspection.

The Abbot himself, a very dignified old gentleman, came out to meet me, followed by a host of his dependants, who shouted in their turn that there was no deception in the matter,

and that a similar amount of grain was distributed daily.

Seeing the deplorable waste of grain, with some difficulty I collected all the baskets together, and led the way to a tank close by, with banks half a mile in circumference, followed by the crowd of paupers and cripples, numbering thousands.

Some having neither arms nor legs were conveyed in baskets on the heads of their friends, some came on all-fours, whilst others dragged their deformed bodies along with the aid of a stick. One man suffering from lupus, had no face, but merely a throat into which his wife deposited his food. A cloth was thrown over his remnants of a skull, as even the natives could not look on such a sight as he represented without horror.

Then there were dwarfs and lepers, the blind and dumb, and idiots, which had they lived in England would have been shut up in hospitals, or asylums, but here were allowed to run loose in all their hideous deformity, and in many cases the wonder was that life should linger in such loathsome bodies.

On arriving at the tank I made the crowd sit

down, and although it was too unwieldy to manage properly without a regularly organized scheme of distribution, it was satisfactory to see that, if the grain was unequally distributed, none of it was wasted.

Whether this distribution of alms took place every day, or was got up for my special benefit, I could not satisfactorily make out; about one-half of the crowd said one thing, which the other half flatly contradicted. So I referred both sides to the Civil Court, without coming to any decision in the matter. I had previously tried to settle the case amicably, but unfortunately without any success whatever.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon I arrived at Sheikhpura, where a deputation of the principal townspeople came out to meet me. The bench of honorary magistrates with whom I was to sit, and whose method of conducting criminal trials I was expected to report on, led the procession. They were closely followed by the local bar, the clerks, the witnesses, and the complainants. The accused persons were paraded between a guard of the police, whilst a well conducted rabble (I cannot call them the great unwashed, for everybody bathes daily in

Monghyr) brought up the rear. The first question of importance to be solved was, in whose house should the bench sit? because the owner of that house would consider himself publicly elevated above his fellows until the time of my next visit should arrive.

It was ultimately agreed, however, that we should repair to the house of a gentleman, a descendant of the nawabs who formerly ruled over this part of the country; and followed by the crowd, we lost no time in adjourning there. Whilst the preliminaries were being arranged, by the nawab's request, I inspected his house, which although the best house in the town, was a tumble-down rambling place, which in England would at once be abandoned to owls and bats. Now, Demoiselle cranes, storks, and bar-headed geese (*Anser indicus*), were walking about the court-yard, whilst a small tank in the centre of the yard contained a number of gold fish. On the wall was suspended a calendar of lucky and unlucky days which my host consulted daily, and according to his own account placed great reliance in. One room was fitted up in European style, and shown with considerable pride. There were three blue hanging lamps, two

mirrors which reflected one's face awry, a pair of cheap French prints, both alike, a very greasy bolster, evidently an heirloom, and a writing-table on which rested an account book, and a bottle of pickles.

We next inspected the garden, which was considered the best in the town. Marigolds, and unpruned roses filled most of the beds; and I saw the yellow flax (*Linum trigynum*), which is called the guinea plant. By its side was the red flax, so often seen in English gardens, and the blue flax was growing in the fields close by. The three primitive colours are rarely seen in the same genus; indeed I cannot recal another instance.

By the time the house and garden were inspected, the case of alleged assault to be tried was ready, the prisoner was at the bar, and the witnesses present to be examined. The establishment of benches in Monghyr consisting of native honorary magistrates, is of very recent date, and is a capital method of getting good work done at moderate cost to the State. The natives understanding the manners and customs of their countrymen, can of course judge better than Europeans of the

merits of each case before them, and as they only try petty cases, a moderate knowledge of law and procedure suffices.

Although nearly the whole town had assembled to see the bench at work, there probably was not a single person among the crowd who saw anything degrading or absurd for the representatives of their country and their creed to be subjected to the criticism of one whose colour, creed, and language, were all more or less repugnant to them, and who was born in another quarter of the globe.

The examination which ensued would have exhausted the patience of even a London magistrate. "Where did the defendant strike you? Were his eyes turned at the time to the north, or the south? Where were you looking at the time? Did he strike with his left hand, or his right? Were his fingers closed? Was his thumb outside or inside his fist? (The questioner illustrating his meaning with his own hand.) Did he hit out from the shoulder, or from the elbow? Did you attempt to guard your head? With the left hand, or the right? What kind of wood was the stick with which you were

struck? Was it a male bamboo, or a female bamboo?" and so on.

This microscopic examination, however, was probably got up for my special benefit, in order to show how eager the people at Shiekhpura were for the elucidation of the truth.

Substantial justice, however, is administered by the bench, and I could not help contrasting the trial with the first case which I tried soon after my arrival in India during the Mutiny.

A thief was brought up before me for stealing a bundle of rice. The custom in those days was for the native clerk to read the written story of the complainant before the witnesses were heard, and although I had passed the usual examination in Hindustani, I found on hearing the indictment that I could hardly understand one word of it. The heat, the clerk's monotonous voice, and the mesmeric influence of the punka combined, closed my eyes, and I fell fast asleep upon the bench. The clerk, thinking probably that it was useless to awake me, went on with the case; but when it was finished I awoke, horrified at my unseemly conduct, and thinking what on earth I should do. My clerk, however, who was

master of the situation, seeing my embarrassment whispered in my ear the single word, "*dismiss*," or as he pronounced it, *dish-mish*. Satisfied that my clerk had found the best solution to my dilemma, I re-echoed the word "*dismiss*," and the prisoner was informed by the native, whose duty it was to do so, that "His Worship after giving his case a patient hearing, had come to the conclusion that the charge was not proved, and that he might go about his business."

Next morning my clerk, who was a little grey-headed old gentleman, tapped softly at my door, and on entering my room, having looked carefully round to see that no one was listening, gave me a lecture couched in terms which only a native of Bengal could supply. He began by saying that the entire population of the district hailed my advent with joy. That so distinguished a luminary had never previously sat upon the bench; and that even those who lost their claims in my court must be satisfied. Having as he thought brought me into thorough good terms with myself and my ability, he added that, notwithstanding the admirable qualifications which I displayed, if I went to

sleep periodically upon the bench, some rascal would certainly complain to Government, and both he and I would get into a scrape. It is needless to say that I took the hint, and soon I could master the language sufficiently to try the petty cases brought before me without reproach.

CHAPTER VIII.

Camp Life.—Beauty of the Country during the cold Weather.—Sun Hemp.—Flax.—The Silk-cotton Tree.—Birds.—Insects.—Toads.—The Flame Tree.—Beetles. Vast flocks of Wildfowl.—Crested Grebes.—Ibises.—Snake Birds.—Egrets Nests.—Coots.—Mullets.—Weeds. Skylarks and Roses.

The life which I am now leading resembles that of the patriarchs of old. A dweller in tents, surrounded by flocks and herds, I wander from place to place, and sleep in the mango groves, where the shades of night overtake me. On the 10th of February I crossed the Ganges, and joined Major Waller, the Superintendent of Police, who, with his wife and four children, have a separate encampment; and the only drawback to our perfect enjoyment is, that the Indian cuckoo and Coppersmith barbet are calling to their mates from

the summit of every tree, reminding us that the cold weather is drawing to a close, and that we shall have to take shelter, before long, in houses.

The thermometer at sunrise is still below 50°, and at about 6 in the morning our cows and goats move on to the next camping ground. Then come our carts, laden with baggage, and, when they have fairly started, we turn out for early breakfast. The horses and ponies are brought round soon afterwards, and we all mount amid the admiration of the entire village, which, seldom being honoured by European visitors, comes out to see us off. The proprietor of the surrounding land, mounted on a small-sized camel-shaped horse, with pink nose and tail, accompanies us; nor does he leave us until I promise to give him a certificate of horsemanship—a much-coveted distinction in these days of muscular precedence in India.

The country looks its best at this season of the year. The wheat is in ear, and nearly every cold-weather crop is in flower. The yellow Sun-hemp (*Crotolaria juncea*), a member of the pea family, is grown in patches in

every village, and supplies the inhabitants with string for tying the framework of their roofs, and for other household purposes. There is also the yellow Safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), which yields a beautiful dye for exportation, or for those villagers who wish to make their clothes look smart. This plant is much affected by plant-lice, whose extraordinary system of reproduction may here be studied with advantage.

The next field of flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) is a mass of blue flowers; but the fibre so much prized in other countries is not valued here. The crop is grown only for the seed, which yields the linseed oil of commerce. The Mustard, which a month ago covered ten thousand acres in these parts, is now being cut and stored in the open air as there is little fear of it being damaged by rain under such a cloudless sky. Field after field of peas, with white and purple flowers, are also passed, and this crop affords cheap food for the poorer classes, who mix the peas with other kinds of flour for making bread. Nor are the crops alone the only part of the beautiful landscape. The Silk-cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*) is covered

with a mass of bell-like crimson flowers, each of which has an attendant bird, and many insects, sipping the sweet nectar. Five species of starlings may be counted in a single tree. The European starling, a common visitor to Monghyr at this season; the Pied Starling (*Sternopastor contra*); the Common Mynah (*Acridotheres tristis*); the Black-crested Mynah (*Tememichus pagodarum*); the Bank Mynah (*Acridotheres ginginianus*), the only bird in this district which building in holes of trees or banks, lays coloured eggs. *Parus cinereus* may also occasionally be seen. This is the only Tit which visits Monghyr, and I have never noticed it south of the Ganges in the plains. Along with these will be seen the beautiful Green Bulbul (*Phyllornis jerdoni*), and the Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Otocompsa jocosa*), and crows whose weight breaks off the flowers which lie scattered on the ground below. Insects, chiefly of the order *Hemiptera*, have assembled also to feast upon the nectar. There is the Brown Tree-Bug (*Cantao occellatus*), and the Spear-back Bug (*Tetrodo bilineata*), which if crushed betrays the family to which it belongs.

A near ally to these insects is the Flying Bug (*Æthus maurus*), so well known to Europeans in India. During the rainy season, on wet moist nights when there is no moon, large swarms come out of their fastnesses among the crops, and fly off to any house where a lamp is visible. In they come by thousands, through every window incautiously left open, and where the window is closed, they fly against the glass in a continuous shower, creeping under the doors, and having effected an entrance into the house fly straight to the dinner-table, where they commit suicide by falling headlong into the soup, or any dish which is not carefully covered up. They are particularly fond of getting entangled in curry, and in ladies hair, and on the slightest provocation exude a liquid, the odour or taste of which when once experienced is never forgotten. It is a great mistake, however, to suppose that because the odour of the bug is disagreeable to man, that it is equally so to other animals. The toads which lived around the Monghyr church fed greedily on these insects, and were summoned from their holes by the vesper bell on moonless nights, hopping up the steps where they

waited patiently until the lamps were lighted, and the congregation and the bugs appeared. On these occasions children may safely be taken to church without fear of their getting wearied by the sermon; because watching the toads in pursuit of bugs, as they hop about under the reading-desk, or between the feet of the congregation, completely distracts their attention, and keeps them quiet. Indian toads have wonderful digestions, and when hungry may be induced to swallow live coals apparently without injury.

Associated with the Silk-cotton tree is the no less beautiful Flame tree (*Butea frondosa*), which is now a gorgeous sight. A dye is extracted by the natives from the flowers, but it is too evanescent to be much valued. Here, too, both birds and insects have assembled in great force to feast on the nectar which the flowers contain. Major Waller presented to my museum a Broad-billed Roller (*Eurystomus orientalis*), which he shot in a Flame tree. This bird is very seldom seen in Monghyr, although the allied species (*C. indica*) is very common. At Koostia, where Bishop Cotton was drowned, the latter bird meets the Burmese Roller

(*Coracias affinis*); and every bird I collected there was a hybrid between the two species.

I seldom passed a Flame tree in flower, without having a hunt for insects. Here I found the Blue-spotted Black and Yellow Butterfly (*Junonia œnone*), the Black-tipped Cabbage Butterfly (*Catopsila chryseis*), and the Crimson-lined Satin Moth (*Areas lactinea*). Beetles, too, were well represented by the Brown-spotted Beetle (*Adorium inpunctatum*), the Pale-green Beetle (*Astycus chrysochlorus*), and many others. Scarlet now at every turn stands out in bold relief against the green foliage and clear blue sky; for besides the flowers which make the landscape gay, the roof of nearly every house is covered with capsicums drying in the sun.

Wallace, in his most interesting work on Brazil, says, "The aborigines are an agricultural people, cultivating sugar-cane, sweet potatoes, yams, pine-apples, maize, arnotto, plantains, capsicums, and tobacco." This description applies equally well to Monghyr, and to the list potatoes, also of American origin, may be added. The same author also says that "among the forest trees of the Amazon the

Leguminosæ are much the most abundant in species; they also most attract attention by their curious bean-like fruits, often of extraordinary size or length. The flowers of this family are among the most brilliant and conspicuous." This description also applies equally well to Monghyr.

Nor does the care of what we shall eat at all tend to disturb our enjoyment. Near here are the head-quarters of the wading and swimming tribes. Moving from camp to camp we generally pass a lake or marsh, where a few shots would provide a dinner for us all, were we not daily supplied with food from home. There is a lake at Sakarpoor, along our line of route, which is well worth a visit, particularly as few Europeans have been there. One side of the water is covered with a forest of Marsh Oak-Myrtles (*Barringtonia acutangula*), and as a considerable portion of their trunks are under water, they afford safe roosting places for the birds. I made the following calculation of the birds which I have seen assembled there together:—wild geese, 5,000; red-crested pochard, 20,000; pintail duck, 20,000; pochard, 50,000; teal, 20,000; garganey, 20,000; gadwall, 10,000;

shoveller, and ferruginous duck, 10,000; glossy ibis, 10,000; red-crowned ibis, 1,000; black-headed ibis, 100; curlew, 100; purple heron, 100; common heron, 200; egrets, 10,000; purple coot, 2,000; jacana, 5,000; bald-headed coot, 50,000; godwit, 50,000; stilt plover, 5,000; cormorant, 10,000; Indian snake-bird (*Plotus*), 5,000; crested grebe, 100; dabchick, 200; osprey, 20; white-tailed eagle, 20; kite, 100; other birds of prey, 20. Although I have often seen wild fowl in force before, I never saw anything like them here. As I glide along in my canoe, the red heads and coral bills of the crested pochards look as though the water were covered with flowers; and on coming near the rising of successive flocks, sound like thunder, or waves of the sea breaking against a rocky shore.

This wild fowl paradise is seldom disturbed. The owner of the surrounding land told me that when he was a boy he occasionally killed a few ducks there; but since his father's death, and his succession to the property, he had more important things to attend to. The wild fowl bring him no revenue; and I astonished him by saying that, if he could transport it to

England, the lake would let for more than a thousand pounds per annum, in order to supply the London markets with wild fowl.

Among the birds which came flying over our heads were some I had not previously noticed in Monghyr; and it was not until they settled on the water that I saw at once they were Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*), which supply the grebe of commerce. Being in winter plumage, their grotesque frills, so well represented by Morris in his "British Birds," were not well developed; but on our coming near they disappeared apparently to the bottom of the lake, for it seemed hardly possible that the birds which a few seconds after appeared on the water several hundred yards ahead, could be the same. It was useless to attempt *La chasse du grebe*, as practised in Switzerland; for our canoes, formed of hollowed-out trees, could only be punted tediously along, and giving chase to the birds resembled tortoises in pursuit of hares. Major Waller, however, was determined to secure some specimens; so collecting as many canoes as possible, we beat the lake in line. Down went the birds again on our coming near, and by the time our boats had

advanced twenty yards, were as far off as ever. The chase would have been endless, but that the water had a limit; so when the birds found they could dive no further, they rose from the water, and came flying over the canoes where two fell to our guns. The shot which cost the grebes their lives, nearly ended Major Waller's also; for the recoil of his gun, as he was standing on his frail canoe, sent him headlong into the deep water, and being a heavy man, it was with the greatest difficulty that he scrambled on board again, wet through, and his gun-barrels full of water.

The time most interesting to the naturalist on this lake was at sunset, when the birds were coming in from all the country round to roost on the marsh myrtles. The air was quite alive with birds. On one side might be seen a string of Black Ibises (*Geronticus papillosus*) two miles long, followed by a similar line of cousins, the White Ibises, near allies of the sacred bird depicted on Egyptian tombs. Then came flocks of Glossy Ibises, and Shell Ibises (*Anastoma oscitans*), which had been hunting the neighbouring marshes for snails (*Ampullaria palustris*), which they share with

the Mushirs, and other low-caste men, who alternately live and starve in the villages around. The Shell Ibises must lead happy lives, far happier probably than their human neighbours, for they have little trouble in procuring food. The marshes swarm with snails, and the empty shells which are left by the birds are collected in large baskets, and sold in the Monghyr bazaars for manufacturing lime. My servants used to walk delicately in the swamps for fear the snail shells should cut their feet; but once an accident occurred when I had to bind up my servant's foot with my handkerchief, and send the man home in a palkee, which with great difficulty I procured after an hour's hunting, from a neighbouring zemindar.

When the ibises have settled on the trees, lines of geese appear flying high in the air, out of gun-shot; for these birds in India are now nearly, if not quite as wild, as they are in England, and we could seldom kill them. The best plan was to dig a hole in the ground, on the borders of a swamp, and watch in ambush for the flocks as they passed overhead. They preferred to remain on the sandy islands in

the Ganges during the night, and would not alight upon the inland marshes when gunners were about, apparently knowing the high estimation in which they are held by epicures for the table.

Cormorants (*Graculus javanicus*), on the other hand had no such fear; and would perch by thousands on the trees around, inviting the tyro to shoot at them under the supposition they were ducks. The Snake Birds (*Plotus melanogaster*), which were nearly equally numerous, kept their distance when they could; for although their flesh is ranker even than that of their allies the cormorants, their scapular feathers are prized alike by the barbarians to the east of India, and by European ladies to adorn their hats. The aristocratic Brahmins used to speak with great contempt at what they considered the barbaric tastes of European ladies, sticking feathers in their hair; bird's wings upon their hats; beetle's wings upon their dresses; and tiger's claws, set in gold, around their necks.

The snow-white egrets which are coming in by thousands here, are also affected by the Paris fashions; and in this remote region I

found a native hunter who slaughtered hundreds of them during the breeding season, when arrayed in their nuptial plumes, leaving the helpless young ones to die of hunger in their nests. The Cattle egret, so rare in England, though figured in works on British birds, is common here; and I have often seen their nests. There is a large colony in a tall tamarind tree by the side of the road close to Monghyr, in the middle of a flourishing bazaar. They have apparently built here for many generations, and as the natives never molest them they will continue to build every season, until the tree falls down through age. The bright blue bird which flies screaming by, is the White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), and even this poor bird is sacrificed by thousands on the altar of fashion, both to the east and west. In the Kensington Museum may be seen Chinese dresses adorned with its feathers, and the wings when prominently displayed in their hats, are supposed to add to the attraction of English ladies young or old. I was riding along the public road one day, when I saw in the distance an immense patch of blue glittering in the mid-day sun, and on coming near I found that the

colour was caused by several thousand skins of the Smyrna kingfisher drying in the sun. They belonged to a couple of hunters who had been prowling about the country catching the birds in the pairing season. They had a tame decoy bird, and a net with them, and whenever they found a likely-looking place they tethered the decoy bird to the ground, and set up their net close by. They had not long to wait before the kingfisher, which looked on that part of the country as his own, irritated at seeing a rival near, dashed down to punish the intrusion, and being blind with rage, flew against the net which entangled him in its folds.

The Coot, so well known in England, is apparently the commonest bird here, and as our boats glide along flock after flock rises, the birds striking the water with their feet for about twenty yards before they rise fairly on the wing. Like the grebes the coots are only migrants. I do not know where they go to breed; but the fishermen on the lake declare they fly across the Himalayas, which are visible from the swamp on a clear day, at the first approach of the monsoon. The fact of the

coots leaving the swamp appears peculiar, as these birds as a rule breed in the plains among the reeds of any lake or swamp which does not entirely dry up during the hot season.

Nor is the wild-fowl shooting the only amusement which this lake affords. Many a pleasant hour may be passed in watching the ospreys plunging after their prey, and sport may be varied by shooting large Mullets (*Mugil cascasia*) as they spring from the reeds, which grow along the banks, into deep water. Here, too, the world-renowned *Vallisneria spiralis* grows in great profusion, and carries on its wonderful nuptials from year to year unnoticed by human eye. I gathered also some specimens of the Hedgehog gourd (*Luffa echinata*) from the marsh myrtles in the middle of the lake. Beneath the water, as the boat glides by, is seen the Yellow Butterwort (*Uticularia stellaris*), whose leaves and roots afford hiding-places for myriads of fish and insects which inhabit the marsh. The blue lotos, known here as "*Konki*," may also occasionally be seen. It is called *Lil kamal*, in Bengal; and many Hindoos are named after it. The natives generally have picturesque names. One of my clerks was the Blue Lotos; whilst

the orderly, who usually carried my gun, was Babar Ali, or the Lion of God.

We seldom made good bags upon this lake, as, after a shot or two had been fired, most of the birds kept out of gunshot, and we did not care to shoot any but those most valued for the table. By far the best shooting was obtained by taking up a position under the shelter of a tall rahar (*Cytisus cajan*) field, between two lakes, where the ducks passed overhead within gun-shot. It was rather sneaking sport, and we only practised it once or twice in the year; but I might have made a fortune by the sale of the birds alone, could I only have sent them to the London market. An orderly was sent on ahead, armed with a pistol and a flask of powder, with which he put up the birds upon the largest lake, and drove them flock after flock over the place where we lay concealed. First a flock of red-crested pochards would arrive, the handsome drake leading a team of ducks. Four barrels brought down as many birds, and, by the time we could slip in new cartridges, a flock of pintails would come by, and four or five more birds would fall. These were succeeded by a string of shovellers, which

we let go by; and then would come three or four gadwalls, which fall with a heavy thud upon the ground.

Ruddy shield-drakes, and pochards, and whistling ducks, we always let go by, as they were not worth eating; but, by the time the sun was setting, and we thought of returning to our tents, we had as many ducks as we could carry home with us.

As we passed along the fields, which at this season are looking bright and green, I generally took a basket for collecting specimens of the wild flowers and the weeds, and the crowd of villagers who always accompanied me vied with each other to gather species which were either interesting or rare. Wonderful were the tales they had to tell about the various virtues or vices which the plants possessed. The Little Hedgehog plant (*Phlomis zelanica*) appears in every field, and is not much molested by the hungry cattle which rush upon the field directly the crops are cut. Gleaning is unknown; for the poor rayats cannot afford to "Fling from the full sheaf the liberal handful," but they gather up every ear of corn, and only leave the weeds for their flocks and herds. The Indian Pink

(*Dianthus chinensis*) is common in fields of wheat; and the blue Orobanche in every field of tobacco. The rayats may be seen collecting the Broomrapes in baskets to give them to their cows. Then there is the Blue Borage (*Borago indica*), and the elegant Balloon vine (*Cardiospermum halicacabum*), may be seen in almost every hedge.

The Indian Forget-me-not (*Cynoglossum racemosum*) appears in many fields; and the Indian Spurge (*Euphorbia indica*), being untouched by cattle, has taken possession of a considerable portion of the country. For a similar reason other members of the family abound, particularly the Fever Bush (*Jatropa glandulifolia*), which grows rank upon every heap of rubbish in Monghyr. It is said that this plant is an exotic, and that its extraordinary abundance in Monghyr is of quite a recent date. The native name is *Belati bagandi*, or the European wild castor-nut.

But to enumerate all the plants which I have gathered and identified in Monghyr would require a separate volume; and drying them formed one of the principal occupations of my numerous servants in camp. The work just

suited them; it was not too hard, and it gave them an appetite for their dinner, besides affording them an opportunity for ventilating their knowledge of botany, and the wonderful cures which the plants effected, when administered by cunning hands, upon themselves or their relations. My native visitors, who always, when I was in camp, came thick upon me, could never exactly make out what my motives for collecting were, but they delighted in looking through my microscope at the pollen of various plants, the spicula of my freshwater sponges, or the emerald beauties of the copper beetle's wing. "Wonderful!" they would exclaim, "Subhana-llah kya sani' hai," "The pure God, what an excellent artificer he is!"

Any account of the natural history of Monghyr would be incomplete without mention of the skylarks and wild roses (*Rosa involucrata*) which abound in the north-eastern portion of the district, and remind us, as we ride through the fields from one camp to another, of a summer's morning in England. The Skylark (*Alanda gulgula*) comes very near the English bird; and except, perhaps, to very accurate ears, the song of both birds appears identical.

It is one of the few species, which build their nests upon the ground, common in Monghyr. Its immunity from the attacks of vermin, which decimate other ground-builders, is probably caused by the yearly overflow of the Ganges, which floods the wheat fields during the rainy season, and keeps the snakes, mongooses, cats, and foxes, in check. When the water retires the larks pair, and by the time the wheat is in ear in March their nests abound. I have often found their eggs, which are similar, though smaller, than those of the English skylark.

But, although the birds which build their nests upon the ground in Monghyr are not generally abundant, it is worthy of remark that the cold weather visitants which retire beyond the Himalayas and make their nests upon the ground in Central Asia are unusually numerous; for instance, snipe, quails, and the short-toed larks (*Calandrella brachydactyla*), which come in clouds to Monghyr to feed upon the cheena crops (*Panicum miliaceum*) in March. The wild rose is then in bloom, and grows in great profusion on the margins of the deep jheels, or water hollows, which intersect the north-east portion of Monghyr. They

scent the air around; and this part of the country is well worth a visit in March in order to see the roses and hear the skylarks sing. Associated with the wild rose is the wild Sage (*Lantana indica*), and these two plants nearly monopolize the banks of many of the water-holes.

CHAPTER IX.

Pariah Dogs in Monghyr.—Vast number killed annually.—Fishing in the Ganges. — Crocodiles. — Inundations during the Rainy Season.—One hundred Miles in the Ganges on a bundle of Castor-Oil Sticks.—The Death of the late Bishop Cotton.—The Government Gardens at Monghyr.—Large Vegetables.—Bright Flowers.—The Calabash Tree. — Chameleons.—The Chameleon Fish.—Mahogany Trees.—Winged Seeds.—Baptists in Monghyr.

Among the things noticeable by travellers in all Eastern countries are the numerous ownerless dogs, which prowl about every town and village, revenging themselves for the kicks and curses which they receive during the day, by rendering the night hideous with their howlings, and driving away sleep from nervous eyelids. In India, however, the natives, being blessed with nerves similar to those possessed

by the ox and ass, trouble themselves very little about the dogs, or their midnight orgies; and it is not unusual to see the native stretched on his humble cot, sleeping the sleep of the innocent, whilst his faithful hound, tied up at the foot of his bed, is either baying at the moon, or, if of a pugnacious disposition, is challenging the country far and near to fight. But to Europeans in India, whose nerves are more tightly strung, pariah dogs are a nuisance; and in every station the Government, or the municipality, pays a reward at certain seasons of the year for their destruction.

These seasons are fine times for the Hindoo Domes, a pariah race themselves. Armed with clubs, they visit all parts of the station, and knock every ownerless dog on the head. At Monghyr, and the neighbouring railway depôt at Jamalpur, nearly one thousand dogs are annually killed in this way; and they cost the municipality twelve pounds ten shillings, at three-pence per head. Their places are soon filled up by their country cousins, who, after the Domes' visitation, find the coast clear, and live in considerable luxury until their turn also comes to be killed. They are fine powerful

dogs, and very unlike the typical gaunt, half-starved, oriental pariah. Many of them resemble English fox-hounds; and a pack of Monghyr pariahs running side by side of a pack of fox-hounds, at some distance, would not be easily distinguishable.

In consequence of the wholesale destruction of ownerless dogs, cases of hydrophobia are rare; indeed, no case came under my notice during the four years I resided in Monghyr.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in disposing of the dead bodies of the dogs and snakes which daily came pouring into the municipal office. At first we tried burying them in the Government garden, but during the night they were all dug up by jackals, and the gnawed bones were scattered all over the place, much to the annoyance of Badminton players in the gardens.

It ended in the bodies being buried outside the town during the dry season, and during the rains being thrown into the Ganges, where they were at once attacked by crocodiles, turtles, and fish. At that season the river, several miles broad, sweeps by Monghyr at a

tremendous pace; and the station would long ago have been swept away but for some quartzite rocks, which form an effectual barrier to all encroachment. On the other side of the rocks, where the dead bodies are thrown to feed the fish, an extensive backwater is formed, which, again meeting the current near the rocks, forms a series of whirlpools, which tear round and round, giving the water the appearance of a huge seething cauldron. This is the home of the huge Shark-mouth Siluroid (*Bayarius Yarrellii*), a most useful scavenger in the Ganges, though he commits sad havoc on the best-flavoured fish in the world, the Hilsa Shad (*Clupea palasah*). A pleasant hour may be passed sitting on the rocks overlooking the river, watching the fishermen below, and the dexterity with which they steer their little boats smoothly over the troubled waters. One man sits on the point of the bows, holding a clap-net in the water, whilst his two companions steer him straight down stream over the whirlpools. When a Hilsa strikes the net it is hauled up at once; but when a Bagarius —perhaps weighing a hundred pounds—strikes it, a tremendous struggle takes place. The boat

is turned towards the shore; one man only guides it, whilst the other goes to his companion's aid. It takes their united strength to hold the net until smooth water is reached, when, throwing down his oar, the third man runs to help his companions, and all three haul in the struggling fish.

Huge Gavials (*Crocodilus gangeticus*) abound in the same water, and occasionally get entangled in the fishermen's nets. During the famine of 1874 they afforded many a meal to the low castes, though the flesh is almost as tough as India-rubber. They were often brought to me alive. Young ones, just escaped from the egg, and some on carts, full grown, fourteen or fifteen feet long. The Alligator of Europeans in India (*Crocodilus palustris*) is seldom seen in the Ganges, at Monghyr, although it abounds in the smaller rivers and marshes to the north. They are particularly numerous in the Tiljuga river, and get fat on the dead bodies of Hindoos which are thrown into the river. Anyone crossing this river during the cold season may see forty or fifty basking on the river bank, in company with gavials and turtles.

During August, when the rainy season is at its height, the Ganges, the Tiljuga, and other streams where the crocodiles abound, overflow their banks, and, spreading over the river, convert the country for many miles into a vast marsh, with the villages, which are built on the highest land available, appearing like islands in its midst. The poor villagers have then a very hard time of it; and, when an unusually high flood occurs, they are obliged to take refuge on the roofs of their huts, which they share with snakes, frogs, and other washed-out reptiles. Most of them, however, retire to the mainland on the first appearance of the flood, but a few, with a perseverance worthy of a better cause, stick to their ruined huts as long as they will hold together. It sometimes happens that the roof is washed away; and it is not an uncommon sight to see persons sitting on their roofs floating down the river. Such persons are usually good swimmers, and manage somehow to get to land; but occasionally they are drowned. They get into whirlpools, which suck them down. A curious instance occurred lately in Monghyr, which illustrates how persons used to the water have

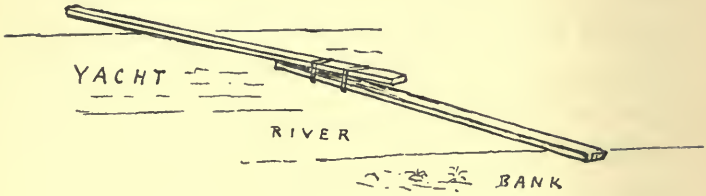
confidence and feel at home in it, whilst other persons lose their presence of mind and are drowned.

A woman of the fishing caste was sitting on the banks of the Ganges in the Patna district, a hundred miles from Monghyr. By her side was a bundle of castor-oil sticks which she had been carrying. Suddenly the bank gave way, and she fell into the water, dragging the bundle of sticks with her. The stream was running like a mill-race, and in a few minutes she was carried far away from the shore. She, however, clung bravely to her bundle, which bore her up safely. At last she was carried into mid-stream, and borne along at about five miles an hour. Village after village, and many boats, were passed, to all of which she appealed for help, but in vain. The day passed, and a dark night came on, accompanied by torrents of rain. Still the woman held on, feeling, as she afterwards told me, like a child in its parent's arms; for the Hindoos consider the Ganges their common parent. About the middle of the night she was carried into an eddy, or whirlpool, where she remained for upwards of an hour, carried round and round in a kind of mystic

dance; and then, she said, as it was pitch dark, and raining hard, her heart almost failed her. But at last morning dawned, and she found herself again in mid-stream, rapidly approaching Monghyr. Fortunately for her, my friend, General Murray, happened to see her, and, quickly manning his boat close by, set out and rescued her. The poor woman took the matter with the greatest coolness, although she had come a hundred miles in such a strange manner, and had been twenty-four hours in the water. She was, however, profuse in her thanks, and begged to know her preserver's name, in order that she might for ever after remember him in her prayers. She was provided with food and clothing, and sent back again by rail to her own district, loud in the praise of Europeans compared with her own countrymen, who had declined to help her.

But the Indian rivers are very treacherous to Europeans. I was with the late Bishop Cotton when he was drowned at Koostia, eleven years ago. He had come to consecrate the burial-ground, and in the afternoon I went down by invitation to his yacht, which was

anchored in the Gorai river, and connected with the bank with a plank, thus—



As I walked over these, I remarked that they were rather of a tight-rope description, but living in the wilds, as I was then purchasing land on behalf of Government for the East Bengal Railway, and accustomed to see make-shifts, I did not think much more about the matter then. I had not been long in the Bishop's company, however, before I saw that he appeared to suffer from lameness, and then the narrow plank again occurred to me. His Lordship, however, went ashore, and did not seem at all dissatisfied with the way in which his yacht was connected with the bank. We mounted a trolly on the East Bengal Railway together, and soon were deep in conversation about Marlborough College, where he was formerly headmaster, and I was educated. I asked him if he would like to follow the example of

his predecessor, Bishop Heber, and go out tiger or leopard hunting with me, as I had elephants, and there were plenty of leopards, if not tigers, near. Indeed, I had killed a leopard only a few days previously close by. He replied that he had no time or inclination for shooting tigers; and he reminded me that Bishop Heber did not distinguish himself as a sportsman, having missed the tiger which he shot at. On arriving at the cemetery, we were met by all the European residents of Koostia—about half a dozen—and a native Christian, with whom the Bishop spoke a few kind earnest words, which made the poor man's eyes sparkle; for native Christians are an out-caste race. The ground was then consecrated; and the Bishop gave us a short address, in which he said that, although all Christians hoped their bodies after death would rest in consecrated ground, yet, as we were exiles from our native country, in a land where death might come upon us unawares, at places far from consecrated ground, yet the true Christian need not fear, for his soul was safe with its Creator, whether his body fell upon the battle-field, or upon the sandy plain.

An hour after he had spoken these words he was lying dead at the bottom of the Gorai river.

We returned together from the cemetery, and when we had arrived at a point near the river, we alighted from the trolly, to make way for an engine which was coming along the line. The Bishop's lameness was then apparent, and I caught him by the arm to prevent him, as I thought, falling upon the line as the engine was passing. On arrival at the bank, opposite where the yacht was lying, I suggested that I should help his lordship across the narrow plank, but this he declined, so I wished him good-bye, and turned to go away. I had not gone half a dozen steps, when I heard a splash, and a servant who was on the plank called out, "The lord sahib" had fallen into the water. I ran to the bank, expecting to see him rise to the surface; but I saw nothing, neither his body, nor his hat, nor the stick he was carrying at the time he fell. He had evidently struck his foot against the projecting plank, and, losing his balance, fallen into the stream, which was running like a mill-race at the time. Several of the native sailors wit-

nessed the accident from the yacht, and, as they were excellent swimmers, with hardly any encumbrance in the shape of clothing, they jumped into the stream, but could render no assistance whatever. A boat was quickly manned, and we searched the river until all hope was gone. Early next morning I went in a boat several miles down the river, inquiring from all I met; but no one had seen the bishop's body, which was never recovered. Two other Englishmen were present when the accident occurred, and they gave such conflicting evidence regarding it, that some months after I received a pamphlet from the Cape of Good Hope, written apparently by an opponent of Dr. Colenso, whose writings were much talked of at the time, headed, "Is Bishop Cotton's death a fact, or is it mythical;" and it demonstrated very clearly that, if an historical fact is to be rejected merely because the evidence regarding it is conflicting, the story of Bishop Cotton's alleged death by drowning must be rejected as untrue.

Any account of the natural history of Monghyr would be incomplete without mention of the Government gardens, which, under the

management of General Murray, have risen from a wild jungle to be a model of high cultivation, and a nursery for experiments in arboriculture and gardening. They have an area of twelve acres; and the question first arose how, with the very limited means at our disposal, we could procure entrance gates, and fence the gardens round. Directly the principal landholder and banker at Monghyr heard that gates were wanted, he at once sent a hundred pounds to get a handsome pair from England; and when these arrived, with his name in letters of gold conspicuously written on them, they excited the envy of his brother bankers, who begged to be informed why the name of the donor of the gates should be read by every visitor, whilst theirs remained unnoticed or unknown. The malcontents were then informed that the remedy remained with them; that we should be most happy to erect similar gates at other parts of the garden. This at once produced another pair, which were admirably turned out by the railway workshops at Jamalpoor. The railway engineers also obligingly cut up and painted a large number of old sleepers for posts, at a very trifling cost;

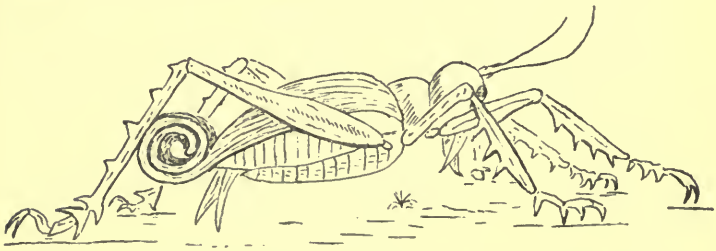
and the Telegraph Department supplied us with spare wire at cost price. By these means ornamental gates and a handsome garden fence were obtained at a very moderate cost, and everyone concerned was pleased with the result.

Here in the gardens perpetual summer reigns, for the mean temperature of the air is nearly 80°, and flowers of varied shape and colour succeed each other in rapid succession throughout the entire year. During the cool season roses, geraniums, snap-dragons, daisies, and other plants seen in English gardens, grow in great profusion from English seed; whilst sweet-peas and violets scent the neighbouring air. When these have passed, and the hot weather arrives, the flowering trees and shrubs bloom with colours seldom seen in Europe. There is the *Poinciana regia*, one mass of crimson flowers,—the most gorgeous of all trees, and which remains in flower for nearly six months in Monghyr. The Indian Golden Oriole, and Blue Smyrna Kingfisher, often choose the branches of this tree as a look-out for their prey; and blue-tailed Bee-eaters select the nearly equally bright *Colvillia race-*

mosa close by, as though they have an eye for the picturesque, and feel that their plumage looks better when contrasted with the crimson flowers. The April sun brings out bright colours; and this is the time for entomologists to catch the violet *Scutellaria nobilis*, which is very common in Monghyr. Its colours fade a good deal after it is killed; and the dried specimens in museums give a very faint idea of the insect's splendour whilst sucking the juices of the flowers in Monghyr. Further on is the Tree Egg-plant (*Solanum macranthum*), which blooms all the year round; and in a forked branch, just out of reach, a Drongo Shrike (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) has its nest, containing four spotted eggs. This irascible bird appears never at rest, and attacks, with blind fury, any intruder, great or small, that happens to come near its nest. I have seen it attack an eagle. One day I picked up two of these birds fighting on the ground; and, even when in my hand, I made them relax the grip, with which each held the other fast, with difficulty. The ground below the tree is occupied by a wax plant (*Hoya carnosa*), and the crimson cypress vine (*Quamoclit vulgaris*), which grow in great pro-

fusion in every garden in Bengal. If the earth is scratched around scarlet mites will probably be found, for they are common in the garden here. The natives occasionally collect them, and use the scarlet for a dye.

Here also is the home of the curious mole-cricket (*Schizodactylus monstrosus*), which all day lies concealed among his fastnesses underground, where he commits, unseen, sad havoc to the plants. At nightfall he sallies out; and often on hot sultry evenings, when I dined in my garden, he would fly on to my head or in my plate, attracted by the light. On one occasion, when I dined on board Sir Richard Temple's yacht, moored by the bank of the Ganges, numbers of these formidable-looking insects flew on deck, much to the discomfiture of



the ladies present. Their powerful jaws do not appear to be used in self-defence, for I

have often held them in my hands without injury. Being heavy unwieldy creatures, they require unusually long wings to support them in the air; and, as the ordinary method for disposing of insects' wings at rest would cause inconvenience, living, as they do, underground, their wings are twisted up behind like a lady's chignon, and can follow the head and body without injury. Few insects in India create so much admiration, curiosity, or horror. Nervous ladies would drive expressly over to my house to inquire whether the "dreadful things" were poisonous; whilst missionaries and "lovers of nature" would send them to me in bottles or by post as "little creatures at once curious and interesting."

One of the greatest curiosities in the garden is the Calabash tree (*Crescentea cujeta*), introduced from the West Indies. The fruit, or Calabashes, resemble green one-hundred-pound cannon balls, and give the tree a very singular appearance. One of them this year has grown between two branches, separated by a few inches only, and as it increased in size, was moulded into a fantastic shape, corresponding with the wood which pressed it in. This tree

grows close to an artificial tank, used for watering the garden, and which forms a regular reptile trap, for frogs, snakes, and lizards, would jump or fall in, and, when once in, could not get out again. I have caught in it cobras, lycodons, and the common grass snakes. The gho-sámp, or bis-cobra lizard, was not an unfrequent, though unwilling, tenant, and as he swam round and round, trying to get out, bull-frogs would mount upon his back, producing a very comical effect.

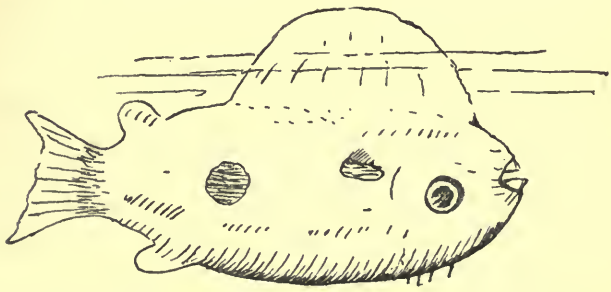
The Imperial proclamation which was read with great ceremony on the 1st of January in Monghyr, was followed by a vegetable and flower show in the Government gardens, to which thousands of natives flocked from all the country round.

In order to show what the ground can produce when properly cultivated and manured, the Superintendent, General Murray, exhibited one of the largest groups of vegetables ever seen. They were piled up in a pyramid, and the base which measured twenty feet in circumference, was trimmed with cauliflowers—each four feet round—potatoes, turnips, carrots, lettuces, cabbages, and green peas, which would

have excited admiration even in Covent Garden. Plantains, green coconuts, and tomatoes, with capsicums—six inches long—formed a second tier; whilst the whole was crowned with a gigantic species of cucumber—five feet long—which had grown upon the roof of the gardener's hut. I subsequently presented the gourd to Dr. Watt, the Professor of Botany at Hoogly, and he sent it to a museum in Scotland as a curiosity. These gourds when dry form the most efficient life-buoys. They are used by the cowherds of Monghyr when they swim their cattle, during the hot season, across the Ganges to feed on the prairie lands in Parganah Farkia.

The Red Trumpet-flower tree (*Hamelia patens*), a member of the Cinchona family, beloved by honey-sucking birds and butterflies, flourishes in the garden; and directly the flowers appear the Purple Sun-bird (*Arachnechthra asiatica*), passes most of its time among the branches, sipping the sweet nectar from the corollas, in company with the Crimson-spotted Swallow-tail (*Papilio diphilus*), the most conspicuous of the lepidoptera in Monghyr, and the Yellow-spotted Butterfly (*Papilio enthonius*),

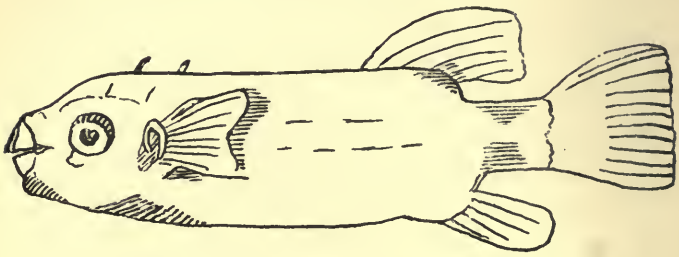
which is also very abundant. I found a chamelion in this tree on the look out for any insect which it could catch. It had probably escaped from confinement, for many are brought round for sale in cages, as they are far from uncommon in the neighbouring hills. The independent movement of the eyes for which chamelions are celebrated, may also be observed in the Chamelion fish (*Tetrodon fluviatilis*). This curious



Tetrodon fluviatilis, River Chamelion Fish distended, floating back downwards.

little fish abounds in the rivers of Monghyr; it was often brought to me for my aquarium. Its power of inflating itself, and erecting its minute spines as a means of defence, are well known. The Brown Balloon fish (*Tetrodon patoca*), was also occasionally brought to me, and a third species (*Tetrodon cutcutia*) was occasionally

seen. As is well known, the bones of the head in this family of fishes are completely ossified; and the teeth which form a formidable beak, are fused together with the skull.



Tetrodon cutcutia.

The Teak tree (*Tectona grandis*), so valuable for ship-building, thrives fairly in the Monghyr gardens, as does also the Mahogany tree, which is easily recognised by its ovate unequal-sided leaves on short petiolules.

Unequal lobed Leaf of the Mahogany Tree.

When General Murray purchased the Basdeopoor park at Monghyr a short time ago, he cut down several of the large trees growing there; and the carpenter who purchased the wood for

a trifle, brought me a sample for a box. On inquiry I ascertained that the wood was mahogany, and on searching with General Murray in the park, we found several other mahogany trees, two of which, tradition says, were planted by a resident civilian forty years ago. They have now attained a circumference of twenty feet. These trees flower in April, but apparently do not produce fruit.

Anyone walking in the gardens early in April, will not fail to observe small silken parachutes

Seed of *Echites* before escape from the Pod.

Seed after escape from the Pod.

flying through the air. These are the winged seeds of a species of Dogbane (*Echites*). The mechanism of these seeds well repays examination. They lie compressed within the smallest possible space inside the pod; but when the pod is ripe and bursts open, the seed springs out and forms a silken parachute, which floats away in search of unoccupied ground with the first passing breeze.

It is curious to note whilst considering the evolution theory, how winged seeds so favourable for the propagation of the species, occur in widely different families of plants. In Monghyr some of the dogbanes have winged seeds, and some have not. The swallow-worts, so common by every road-side, have winged seeds which spread by millions all over the country. Then there are the willow-herbs, and valerians of Europe, with various members of the *Compositæ;* and when the hot winds blow in Monghyr over the sandy churs bordering the Ganges, the winged seeds of the feathered grass fill the air as thick as snow.

The principal trees in the gardens which supply the residents with fruit, are Bombay mangos, yielding the finest fruit in the world, leechees

and mulberries, shaddocks and limes, peaches and loquats, guavas and custard-apples. Plantains grow to a great size, but they are hardly worth eating. The well-known American papaw, a member of the Passion-flower family, flourishes in the garden, and the wonder is how the female flowers are all fertilized. There are no male flowers in the garden; and it was not until I had searched and made inquiries for many months that at last I discovered a tree bearing male flowers at a considerable distance from the garden. In what manner the pollen was conveyed from tree to tree I do not know.

Near the Government gardens are the two Monghyr places of Christian worship: one under the Established Church, the other belonging to the Baptist Mission. But there is no unseemly rivalry between the two. Members of the Baptist choir lend their aid when required by the Church. The Baptist missionary is the manager of a general charity fund subscribed to by all the residents of Monghyr; and a member of the Established Church is the president of the Mission School. This liberal spirit is chiefly owing to the example shown by Mr. Dear, the chief supporter of the Baptist Mission,

and the principal resident at Monghyr. His great object is to show the natives that Christians of all denominations can agree in the main principles of faith; and when the present church was built, he was one of the principal subscribers.

CHAPTER X.

Pir-pahar, or the Saints' Hill.—View from the top.—Horned Owls.—Stone Plovers.—Migrating Birds.—Pelicans.—Eagles.—Insects at Pir-pahar.—The Gular Fig.—European Artizans and Natives.—The sacred hot Spring at Sitakoond.—Pure drinking water.—The Sitakoond Lake.—Fish.—Ospreys.—Kingfishers.—Desperate struggle with a Miller.—Water Beetles.

One of the most beautiful spots in India, if not in the world, is Pir-pahar, or the Saint's hill, two miles from Monghyr. It is the last of a range of hills which extend through the country of the Santhals, far away into Central India. A large two-storied house has been built on its summit, and from the verandah, on a clear day, the Himalayas and Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, may be seen nearly two hundred miles distant. The Ganges flows below on the north, and to the south, as

far as the eye can reach, the green Kharakpoor hills rise one above another, whilst on the intervening plains numerous villages and well-kept fields and mango groves afford a comprehensive view of Indian scenery, scarcely to be surpassed elsewhere. The mango groves and palm trees completely hide the station and town of Monghyr; but, half way to the railway station at Jamalpoor, may be seen the picturesque house of Mr. Batchelor, the traffic manager of the East India Railway; and, close under the distant hills, like a streak on the horizon, appears the railway workshop, one of the largest establishments of its kind in the world. I often wished, as I stood enjoying the magnificent view, that I could compare my estimate regarding it with that of others who had seen the world; and I had the satisfaction of showing it to Mr. Penyston, of Cornwell House, in Oxfordshire, who was travelling in 1877 with his wife in India, and they both agreed that they had seen nothing finer either in Europe or Asia. The house at Pir-pahar has not been regularly occupied for years. It is only occasionally visited by picnic parties from Monghyr; and the solitary watchman,

who has guarded the place for sixteen years, tells me he lives in constant dread of being carried off by a tiger, which he declares prowls about the place, and periodically sweeps the floor of the adjacent Hindoo temple with its tail. There is a cave in the rocks within a few hundred yards of the house which is visited by leopards, but which, as a rule, is tenanted by jackals. Several of these animals may be seen every evening sitting on the hill side, waiting until the night closes in before visiting the banks of the Ganges for their midnight meal on any dead body which may be cast ashore. During the cold season wolves often take up their quarters in the rahar (*Cytisus cajan*) fields; and many a pleasant evening I have spent sitting on the rocks watching for the wolves on their way to the adjacent villages in search of any stray kid or lamb which they could find. As I sat quite still a pair of magnificent Horned Owls (*Urrua bengalensis*), which had their nest in a neighbouring precipice, would come and perch close by and hoot in a deep melancholy manner, like a pair of maniacs calling to each other. My orderly, who carried my gun, always watched these birds with

longing eyes; for their tongues, he said, formed a certain charm against the evil eye, and he coveted them for his only child to swallow. I was afraid some day he might find an opportunity for killing the poor birds, so I assured him that if he did so I would prove the falsity of the charm by ordering my sweeper to administer a sound birching to his son, thus disgracing him for ever.

Directly after the sun had set, the stone plover's cry commenced, and a pair of grey foxes would come hunting for lizards, beetles, or eggs among the rocks; and, by imitating the call of a young animal, I could bring them within a few yards of where I lay concealed. Their movements were always watched by the neighbouring birds, particularly the Black Robins (*Thamnobia fulicata*), whose nests upon the ground are often robbed by these marauders.

The best time for watching the birds at Pirpahar is in October, when the migrants are coming into India from their nesting places beyond the Himalaya mountains. Upon the horizon faint clouds appear, but, on coming near, vast flocks of birds are seen making their

way to their winter quarters in the plains. Yesterday I stood watching an immense flock of Pratincoles (*Glareola lactea*), which seemed undecided where to go, for they were flying round and round in circles at a tremendous pace. At last they started off to the banks of the Ganges, where they will probably remain.

After the Pratincoles came a flock of Stilts (*Himantopus candidus*), easily distinguishable by their long red legs, which act as a rudder behind. These birds, so rare in England, are common here ; they are among the last to leave the district for their summer quarters; and I have observed them feeding in the nearly dried up tanks within the Monghyr fort as late as May 17th. The Stilts are hardly out of sight before a flock of Golden Plovers pass; they are the best-flavoured birds in India, and often stand so thick upon the ground that not long ago I bagged fifteen at one shot.

Following the Stilts, several hundred Godwits (*Limosa ægocephala*) pass on their way to the marshes which abound all over the country. Then come five avocets, which are not often seen here; and then a number of Demoiselle Cranes (*Anthropoides virgo*), which are dis-

persed generally over the district during the cold season. The natives often tame them, and keep them in the court-yards of their houses. Six were presented to me last April, and I forwarded them to the Zoological Gardens in Calcutta.

Last of all comes a flock of pelicans, whose flight is the most graceful of all birds. They appear to sail rather than to fly; and often mount so high in the air that the eye can scarcely follow them. No one seems to know where these birds breed in India; but, tempted by the offer of a reward which I have offered for their eggs, a man brought me an egg which he declared he had taken from a pelican's nest on a lofty tamarind tree. It so happened, however, that the egg contained a well-developed chick; and I soon satisfied myself that the applicant for my bounty had robbed the neighbouring nest of some domestic goose.

Anyone who watches from the summit of Pir-pahar in October, in a single day may see thousands of migrants; birds of prey, swallows and finches, waders and ducks, all coming to the now cooling plains. A few hours suffice in order to accomplish the journey, without

turning to the right or left, faster than the fastest express train. What magnificent scenery these birds must see during their migrations! Snowy mountains, rivers, endless plains and forests. The question is, do all these pass unobserved, or do the emigrants appreciate them all and respond to the cry "O all ye fowls of the air, bless ye the Lord; praise him and magnify him for ever."

Eagles may often be seen hunting over the Pir-pahar hill; for, like all hills in the vicinity of towns, the sheep and goats have waged so successful a war with the plants, that the ground is barren, and affords scanty shelter to any hares or birds which may take up a temporary residence there. I have often watched the eagles circling round and round, flying, apparently without an effort, or without moving their wings, even against the wind.

The insects which I have collected at Pir-pahar are neither richly coloured nor rare. The Saltatoria, or locusts, are best represented there. The Mauve-wing (*Acridium succinctum*), is not uncommon, and the small Crimson-wing (*Caloptenus erubescens*).

In the neighbouring fields of Patua (*Hibiscus*

cannabinus), which supplies the Monghyr population with ropes and string, the Orange-banded Wolf-beetle (*Mylabris pustulata*), may be seen by scores; and when the toddy men cut the date trees, hundreds of Black-ringed Butterflies (*Melanitis ismene*), collect to feast upon the sweet sap, in company with many yellow-banded wasps and ants.

Very little is known of the former residents of Pir-pahar, the only record of them which exists is,—

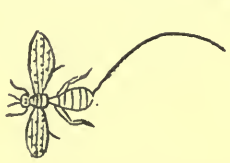
"Hush she sleeps."

written over a grave at the foot of the hill, by some loving hand which also must have grown cold by this time.

One of the residents appears to have had a good deal of spare cash, for he has attempted to hew out a well—with steps leading down to the bottom—out of the solid rock; and another resident appears to have had a taste for arboriculture, as the garden contains several trees which were evidently brought from a distance. Here is the Indian Dogwood (*Alumgium Lamarckii*), the only specimen which I have seen in the district, and one of the few trees for which the natives of Monghyr have no name.

There is also the Twisted-pod tree (*Pithecolobium dulce*), a species of pea easily distinguishable by its leaves divided into two lobes, and its pods twisted up like ram's horns.

Other trees which may be seen there, are the Jasmine-scented Cinchona (*Morinda exserta*), and the Gular fig (*Ficus glomerata*). This last tree is regarded with some awe by the natives, they say it flowers at night when no one is about, and anyone who can find its flowers will be made a king. The figs are well worth study, for whether they are gathered in the dense forest, or from a solitary tree standing on a vast plain, a cloud of gnats bursts out on opening them. The gnats, apparently with great difficulty, creep in at the orifice leading to the inner receptacle which holds the flowers, losing their wings in the struggle. Having once effected an entrance, apparently they lay their eggs among the flowers, with the aid of long hair-like ovipositors, and having fulfilled their



Gular Fig-gnat magnified.

mission die. Under a microscope these minute fig-gnats will be seen to contain parasites like miniature cobras, which in their turn live and die within the fig.*

The European artizans from the Jamalpoor workshops often visit Pir-pahar, and roam through the house at pleasure; but on one occasion a rich native gentleman from Bengal, a friend of the proprietor, took up his quarters there for change of air, bringing with him his harem, and the usual crowd of ragamuffins, uncles, cousins, and flatterers, dignified by the name of "retinue." It so happened that on the following Sunday a party of apprentices from Jamalpur thinking the house was empty as usual, paid the place a visit, and clambering up the steepest side, which is almost inaccessible, except to monkeys, climbed through the window into the drawing-room, where the Bengali's wife was reclining on a sofa. As the apprentices shortly afterwards appeared at my house without their hats, and covered with dust, the sequel to the story may be described in the words of the spokesman of the party. "I had just sat down,"

* For an account of Fig-Gnats and their blind relations, *vide* "The Entomologist" for October 1871.

he said, "and had taken up a book to read, wondering who on earth the female on the sofa could be, when the door was flung open, and a crowd of natives armed with sticks and other weapons rushed in. The book I was reading was seized, and flung into my face, and a shower of blows fell on my head and shoulders in such a furious manner that had not I and my mates jumped out of the window through which we entered the room, and at the risk of our necks rushed down the hill, we should all have been killed outright."

The story was hardly told when the other side appeared breathless with excitement, declaring that a deliberate attempt had been made to take the place by storm.

It was very clear, however, that the whole affair arose from a misconception of facts, so I pacified both parties, and made them all shake hands.

Another show place near Monghyr is the Sitakoond, or Sita's Well, close to Pir-pahar. Here hot water comes bubbling up from the rocks below, and the cause of the heat is explained by the Hindoos as follows :—

Sita, the wife of Rama, Prince of Oude, was

enticed away by Ravena, King of Ceylon. As in the case of Helen and Paris, a great war, in which the gods assisted, arose in consequence, and Sita was recovered. On her return to India, however, the lady had to undergo an ordeal by fire to test her innocence. The Brahmans at the hot spring declare that the test took place there. The ground was dry enough they say before; but when the lady's innocence was established, the lighted pile gave way to a hot spring of water which then burst forth, and has flowed ever since. The Brahmans, as is usual in such cases, suck no small advantage out of the legend, and the Sitakoond has become a place of pilgrimage for pious Hindoos. The water is very pure, and the Europeans at Monghyr drink it cooled.

In 1874 the Ganges flood reached the spring, and this was considered by the Hindoos to be a ceremonial meeting of the goddess Sita with her mother. So great a multitude flocked to the place to bathe in the doubly-sacred waters, that the roads on all sides were blocked; and the European supply of drinking water was cut off for several days.

The hot water flows into low-lying land close

by, and when aided by the rains, forms a lake two miles long, by about half a mile broad. Before the railroad passed through Monghyr, this lake was frequented by myriads of wild fowl, which found abundant supplies of food upon its shallow waters. A species of glass snail, which water-fowl eat, abounds, and there are aquatic plants in considerable variety. The Scarlet Marsh Mallow (*Pentapetes phœniceæ*), occasionally seen in gardens, thrives there; and the Sola pea (*Hedysarum lagenarium*), which supplies the material so much used for pith hats.

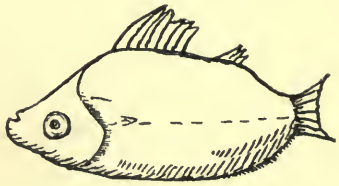
The margin of the lake is fringed with sedges, called chicoras, whose bulbs, beloved by pigs, are shared in times of scarcity by the poorer classes; but they and creeping underground stems of the lotus, which are also eaten, are far more suited for pigs than men, and only those whose status in society is low have recourse to them. These marsh hunters have received poverty as a heritage. They have no hope of rising in the world, for caste keeps them down, even though a scion should be born with the talents of a Shakespeare, or a Crichton; and the consternation which a young Mushir or

Dome would cause on entering a village school, may be more easily imagined than described.

The Sitakoond lake abounds in fish, none of which will rise to the fly, and consequently are never caught by Europeans. They are principally carps, and scaleless silurioids. An Eel-like slippery fish (*Mastacemblus armatus*), with a long and fleshy snout, is also common, and is much beloved by native epicures.

Mastacemblus armatus.

Here also may be found the Climbing Perch (*Anabas scandens*), and the Transparent Chanda (*Ambassis nama*), both of which were exhibited in my aquarium at Monghyr.



Ambassis nama.

The fish increase and multiply in the warm water of the lake; and they would long ago

have completely filled it but for their numerous enemies. The natives bring every conceivable net and engine for their capture. Otters and crocodiles visit the lake occasionally, and even porpoises have been seen there in times of flood. Nor are the birds behind hand in the plunder. Ospreys and the white sea-eagle may nearly always be seen hunting there; and the pied kingfisher (*Ceryl rudis*) is never absent. This bird is one of the most conspicuous objects which meets the traveller's eye on Indian rivers and marshes. It hovers like the English kestrel over its prey; and the mechanism of its wings is so arranged that whilst they are moving or flapping violently, the bird's head and beak is perfectly motionless. This bird is the commonest kingfisher in Bengal, probably because its inconspicuous plumage brings it in no demand for ladies' hats. I have often found its nest in the banks of the Ganges.

A kingfisher's nest has a particular fascination, and always recalls my school-days at Marlborough.

A kingfisher built its nest in the banks of the Kennet, near the Marlborough mill, but the

only way to it was through the miller's house. Now this grinder of flour was a very terrible person, and his oaths, when the boys annoyed him, would come rolling down the lane until they made one's hair quite stand on end. However, I was determined to get the eggs if possible, and having taken a companion to keep watch outside, I waited till the miller went out, and then, creeping through the mill, was soon employed looking for the nest. I had hardly been at work five minutes when it appears the miller had forgotten something, and my companion, who was keeping watch, called out that he was coming back. I darted to the house, and directly I got inside, saw the miller, in a towering rage, swearing the most tremendous oaths, standing at the door. I thought of the Black Knight's encounter with Front de Bœuf, as I sprang up into the air, and coming down, brought both my fists, with all my strength and weight, into the face of my opponent, who, not expecting the attack, measured his length upon the floor. I also lost my balance and fell on top of him, and we rolled about together on the ground. After a desperate struggle I managed to get uppermost, and sat upon the

miller's chest. I don't know what the custom is now at Marlborough, but when I was there we lost our individuality and were known only by our numbers, like convicts; mine was 156, and this was written by order in my cap. The miller, knowing this, had grabbed my cap, and, had that been lost, the victory had been his. I should have lost my standard, and been flogged next day, so I showered blows thick as hail upon his knuckles, and beat his hands upon the stones, until he loosed his grip upon my cap, when, snatching it up, I started to my feet and fled away like the wind, leaving the miller to his own reflections on his back.

Next day my opponent, who sought revenge, was heard narrating his defeat to one of the College sergeants.

"Why didn't you run arter him, miller?" said the sergeant.

"Run arter him," sneered the miller, sulkily, "Why, you might as well have run arter a greyhound."

The White-throated Kingfisher, one of the most beautiful of Indian birds, is also common near the lake; but it feeds principally on crickets and locusts, which abound in the long

grass bordering the water. A species of locust, *Pœcilocera*, is a special favourite, as is also *Phaneoptera diversa*.

I found the nest of this bird, containing six eggs, in the bank of an ash-hole, five paces from a villager's house, into which rubbish was discharged every day.

A water-beetle, a member of the family Dyticidæ, *Cybister guerini*, very similar to *C. Rœselii*, which has occurred in England, also causes sad havoc among the young fish, in company with the water-bugs *Belostoma indica*, and *Ranatra elongata*.

Besides the regular fishers on the lake, pelicans, egrets, herons, cormorants, and snake birds (*Plotus*) also occasionally appear, so that, what with enemies above and in the water, the fish are never at rest. The wonder is, that they have not long ago become extinct.

CHAPTER XI.

Destruction of Wild Beasts in India.—Scarcity of Game in Behar.—The Tree Shrew.—Extraordinary combative Instinct.—Bears.—A Fight for a Cave.—Game Birds' struggle for Existence.—Their numerous Enemies in Monghyr.—Scarcity of Food-yielding Fruits in the Forests.—Absence of Birds in the Forests.—Geology of the Kharakpoor Hills.—Iron Ore.—Former Trade in Hardware at Monghyr.—Monghyr compared with Birmingham.—A'Gun-smith's Shop.—Lead Ore.—Slate.—Timber found in the Hills.—Ebony.—Mistletoe.—Cabinet work of Monghyr.—Beautiful Flowers.

Among the undoubted advantages which India has derived from English rule is the extermination of wild beasts in the great food-producing districts; and in parts of Behar which, a century or two ago, were described as without a trace of cultivation, and abandoned to tigers and wild boars, the tiger is now entitled to rank with the extinct cave-lion, the dinornis, or

great awk. Indeed, what with the large rewards paid by Government for the destruction of wild beasts, and cheap ammunition, the sportsman will soon have to lay aside his rifle in Behar; and, if he wishes to explore the woods, will find it more entertaining to turn his attention to natural history than to shooting, armed with a plant-portfolio, or geological hammer, instead of a gun. But even now-a-days shooting among the Karrakpoor hills may well be supplemented by an examination of the surrounding natural productions, which hitherto have received little scientific attention. The birds, insects, and plants remain unmolested as regards their natural history; and, even among mammals, the curious Tupaia, or Tree-shrew, was first observed by me, only a few months ago. I was beating the jungles for pea-fowl, one evening in November, with very little success, when I heard my companion, who was inside the cover, shoot; and presently, on joining me, he declared that he had killed the greatest curiosity ever seen, a hybrid between a squirrel and a rat. This proved to be the Tree Shrew (*Tupaia Elliotti*), which had not been previously noticed in Bengal. The

Santhals who were present declared that they knew the animal very well under the name of Siga; and they volunteered to bring me as many as I wanted alive. Indeed, under promise of reward, during the next two months Sigas arrived almost daily, and soon I had more than I wanted. I sent nine to the Calcutta Zoological Gardens, and gave the others their liberty, after keeping them for some time in a high roomy cage which I made between the arches of my house. I fed them with cockroaches and mahwa flowers; and they soon became very tame. They afforded considerable amusement by bounding about their cage when excited, springing five or six feet in the air, and propelling themselves from one side of the cage to the ceiling and down again, much as we see leopards bounding about their cages in the zoological gardens.

Although tupaias are not uncommon in the forests of Kharrakpoor, they are seldom seen in menageries, and must be classed among rare animals. This is probably chiefly due to a stongly developed instinct which leads the males to attack each other and fight until one or both the combatants are killed. It was not

long before I discovered this instinct; for, incautiously putting two males together in the same cage, they seized each other and fought so furiously that both fell, locked in deadly embrace, from their high perch, and were killed.

Tupaia or Tree Shrew.

But tupaias are not the only animals which live in the Kharakpoor hills whose numbers are thinned in this curious manner. On the south side of a hill, which may be seen from the Jamui railway station by any traveller on his way to Calcutta from Bombay, there is a cave situated on the face of a precipice some two

hundred feet high, which from time immemorial has been tenanted by bears. Very few Europeans have been there, although it is one of the most picturesque spots in Bengal; and the bears have an easy time of it, feeding on the white ants and plums which abound on all sides, and drinking from the clear mountain stream which flows below. It occasionally happens, however, that the right to possess the cave is disputed by some rival bear, and then a battle takes place, which generally ends in both the combatants, locked in mutual embrace, tumbling over the precipice, and being dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Not many months ago one of these fatal encounters took place; and the dead bodies of the bears were seen by hundreds of persons who assembled from the country round. I passed a very pleasant Sunday there during the last cold season, and the Santhal who accompanied me as my guide told me he also had seen the dead bodies of the bears.

The Kharakpoor hills are not noted for any great variety of birds; and I attribute this to a variety of causes. First, the Santhals are ever prowling about with guns or bows and

arrows, and persecute all birds of any size useful for the pot. There is a continual struggle for existence going on between carnivorous animals and hawks on the one hand and the birds, that satisfy their hunger, on the other. The game birds particularly have little chance, as they all breed upon the ground, and fall an easy prey to cats, snakes, foxes, mongooses, and other vermin. I seldom went out shooting but I put up a huge wild cat, which must carry devastation far and wide among the neighbouring birds; and on more than one occasion partridges which I had wounded were pounced on by cats and carried off into the dense jungle before I had time to interfere. Civet cats are common also in Monghyr; and a pair had their lair and reared their young ones in an old wall close to my house. One night I caught the mother in a large box trap which I had set for jackals; but I let her out, as she could not get at my fowls, and I found her useful in keeping down rats and shrews with which my house was infested.

The only game birds which are plentiful in Monghyr are the migrating quail, for they

can lay their eggs in comparative safety beyond the Himalayas, where the cats and snakes cannot follow them. All the game birds which breed in Monghyr are rare. I never killed more than four brace of partridges on any single day among the hills, and peacocks were seldom seen. On one occasion only I put up a large flock together, and then I brought down a brace right and left. Their eggs were brought to me occasionally, and I have several in my collection now.

Another reason why birds are rare among the hills is scarcity of food; for during the dry summer months when the hot winds blow like the blasts of a furnace, both plants and insects find it difficult to keep alive. The sal and ebony trees are so much cut about by the wood-cutters, that many of the saplings which are left do not bear fruit, and the trees which are not molested by the axe, the sterculias, the dogbanes, the cinchonas, do not yield fruit which birds can eat. In fact, out of the numerous trees which I have noticed in the Kharakpoor hills, two or three species only afford fruit suitable for birds. The "Calcutta Statistical Reporter," for March 1877, gives a

list of all the trees and shrubs, with their native names, noticed by me in Monghyr.

Birds would be far less numerous than they are, but for the plants which are cultivated by man; and the silence which pervades the depths of the primeval forests is agreeably contrasted by the sounds made by a thousand birds and insects on the confines of cultivation, where animal life revels in plenty. Hawks which would hover in vain for food over the tangled branches of the forest trees, may be seen hunting in every field of rice or corn. Crows and mynahs, and bulbuls, and orioles, rear their young among the ryots' gardens; and insects congregate to share the crops and the water which is supplied from the neighbouring wells. The tiny honeysuckers, first cousins of American humming-birds, may, however, often be seen in the recesses of the forests where no other birds appear; for most of the trees yield sweet nectar with their flowers, although their subsequent fruit may be unfit for food. But those who gain their knowledge of the beauty of tropical forests from the conservatories at Kew, are liable to be disappointed here; for beautiful flowers are rarely seen.

From a geological point of view, the Kharakpoor hills are not very interesting. Belonging to the metamorphic series, they contain no fossils, nor even agates, like the neighbouring volcanic hills around Sahibgunge. The metallic ores even are in no variety, although they contain iron sufficient to supply the world for ages. But absence of coal and lime hitherto has rendered these vast iron stores useless; and the East Indian Railway which runs close by, has all its iron from England.

In ancient days, however, iron ore was taken from the hills when fuel was cheap, and worked up with such advantage by the natives that Monghyr became the Birmingham of Bengal; and modern roads are metalled from end to end with the refuse slags of former days, which form in places vast quarries underground.

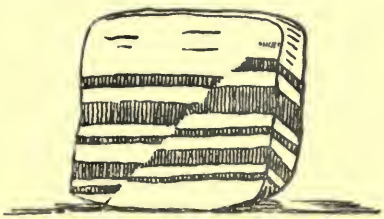
Bishop Heber and Sir Joseph Hooker, as well as less distinguished persons have noted the lingering art displayed in hardware at Monghyr; and a hundred years have made little or no variety in the articles exposed for sale. There are guns, pistols, spear heads, and

three-pronged forks, which bear testimony to the fact that the natives of Monghyr seem much impressed with our national partiality for toast. But labour, cheap as it is here, cannot compete with the English workshops; and the comparison between Birmingham and Monghyr is becoming more marked, not to say ridiculous, every day. It is indeed comparing small things with great; for many a second-rate firm in England consumes more iron during the year than all the hardware manufacturers taken together in Monghyr.

Anyone paying a visit to a gun-smith's factory in Monghyr will look in vain for any of the modern appliances invented for the destruction of life. Instead of steam hammers, tall chimnies, boring and other machines, with a hundred hands to guide them, the visitor will probably see a little old man squatting, with his nose resting on his knees, hammering a piece of Swedish iron into shape, whilst his little son, working at the bellows, brings the scanty stock of charcoal into the required glow. Another man in the corner of the hut is filing up the gun-locks, which are firmly grasped between

the manufacturer's toes; or he is chiselling out the stock from a rough block of sisso wood (*Dalbergia sissoo*). A parakeet is sure to be screaming on his perch, suspended from the verandah; for the unmelodious Indian blacksmiths seem to have a particular fancy for such birds. When the gun is ready it appears to European eyes a treacherous weapon, more dangerous to friends than foes, and inclined to burst on the slightest provocation. But in reality it is a serviceable weapon, and certainly cheap at the modest price of twenty rupees, or two English pounds.

The Kharakpoor hills are distinguished in giving the railway which runs from Calcutta to Delhi, through one vast alluvial plain, its single tunnel. This is cut through streaked metamorphic rocks, interesting only to the geologist, inasmuch as the careful observer may discover



Slip in a streaked metamorphic rock found near Jamalpoor.

here and there clearly-defined slips in the streaks, which testify to the rocks original sedimentary deposit by water.

Further on, on the estates of Sir Jai Mangal Singh, galena and lead ore crops out; and many of the boulders which are seen lying in the water of the mountain streams are so thickly studded with small garnets that they resemble huge plum-puddings.

There are several slate quarries among the Kharakpoor hills, which apparently have been worked for ages, judging from the vast quantities of *débris* which are seen around. Although these quarries would soon make the owner's fortune if they could be transported to England, they return hardly any profit here. The slates are too heavy for roofing the natives' huts, and the people are too poor to be able to indulge in well-built houses which would require an expensive roof. European firms purchase some of the slate; and plates of slate are seen exposed in the bazaars for sale. Although very few Europeans have visited these quarries, they well repay a visit, for they lie buried among the hills near streams which form picturesque cascades among the

rocks; and the botanist or entomologist will find specimens to attract his attention at almost every step he takes. The silver and parsley ferns are very common here; and I found the curious bivalve pea (*Hedysarum strobiliferum*), and the stinging pea (*Carpopagon puriens*), and the rosy pea, apparently *Indigofera violacea*, which particularly attracts attention.

The chief value of the Kharakpoor hills to their owners lies in the trees, which supply the country far and wide with firewood, fibres, posts, and bamboos, as well as gum arabic, myrobolans, and inferior dyes. The principal tree is the *Sakua* (*Shorea robusta*), a member of the Malay camphor family. The utter absence of forest conservancy, however, has long ago caused the disappearance of all giants of the forest; and even when the East India railway was commenced, nearly thirty years ago, Mr. Dear, the railway contractor, could find hardly any large trees capable of affording sleepers. But, except for sleepers, and for the roofs of Europeans' houses, large timber is not much sought after in Monghyr. The principal demand is for posts, fifteen feet

high, which are used as supports to the roofs of native huts, and are in demand everywhere, at a cost of about a shilling each. Large logs, suitable for sleepers or beams, are quite as expensive in Monghyr as in England.

The Indian Ebony (*Diospyros melanoxylon*) is a conspicuous tree in the Kharakpoor hills, although the woodman's axe has laid low most of the large trees. The black-heart wood is in great demand among the Monghyr carpenters, who convert it into cabinets and boxes of antiquated shape and fashion. These articles might become of considerable commercial value to the carpenters if the wood were only properly seasoned, and the manufacturers would content themselves with fair and uniform returns; but up to the present time the Monghyr workmen have not learnt that honesty is the best policy in their native town as well as in London or Paris. The woodman's axe, however, is not the ebony tree's sole enemy. It is marked as a victim by the Indian Mistletoe (*Viscum attenuatum*), which may be found on almost every tree, together with two allied robbers of its sap, *Loranthus longiflorus*

and *L. cordifolius*, the first of these hanging from the trees like honeysuckle during the cold season, gives the woods and groves a gay appearance. But the havoc which it makes on the trees is incalculable. It is useless urging the natives to cut it off their trees, for they are too apathetic and conservative to do anything, however beneficial, which was not done by their forefathers.

The mistletoe is not unlike its English cousin; and few people in Calcutta seem aware of its existence, though there is little doubt an enterprising firm would find some profit in sending a few cart-loads of this favourite plant to decorate European houses in Calcutta.

One of the most beautiful of the jungle products here is the red Chamber Candlestick (*Hastingia coccinea*), which lights up the hill side, particularly if there is water near. The flowers require the direct rays of the sun to bring them to perfection, for I have noticed those which grow under the shadow of the hills are of a much lighter hue than those enjoying the full sun-light. Other conspicuous members of the Verbena family found among

these hills are the Wild Sage (*Lantana alba*), the Chaste tree (*Vitex negundo*), and the Trumpet flower (*Cleredendron phlomoides*), which may be seen climbing over old ruined temples near Kharakpoor.

CHAPTER XII.

Monkey Island.—The Paradise Fly-catcher.—The Kabur Swamp.—Narrow escape from drowning.—Birds on the Swamps. — Jacanas. — Purple Coots. — Cormorants. — Abundance of Fish.—Myriads of wild Ducks.—The Goose-teal.—Water Plants.—Picnic on the Swamp.—The Sacred Island.—Monkeys.—Ascetics.—Ospreys.—Plants on the Island.—Fresh-water Sponges.—Abundance of Mosquitos.—Myriads of Swallows.—Duck-shooting.

Although Monkey Island is a sacred spot, the number of Europeans who have visited it may be almost counted on the fingers. It consists of nearly five hundred acres of land, surrounded by the Kabur swamp, situated in the north-western division of Monghyr. As the swamp is the favourite rendezvous of water-fowl, I always turned my steps towards it during the cold weather of each succeeding year; and my camp was pitched adjacent to the nearest

bazaar, where my servants and horses could be fed. The mango grove in which my sleeping tent was pitched abounded in bamboo clumps, where the beautiful Paradise fly-catcher (*Tchitrea paradisi*) might generally be seen hawking about for flies, with its tail, fifteen inches long, floating out behind. The plumage of these birds, varying from chestnut to pure white, still puzzles naturalists; some of whom think the colour depends on age, whilst others say that the white is the nuptial plumage. As I have seen both white and chestnut males paired with females in the spring, the nuptial theory does not appear correct; and I believe that the colouration is merely due to a mysterious law similar to that which give some men red and others white hair.

At daybreak on the 21st of February I arrived at the margin of the swamp, which covers an area of twenty square miles, and which supports a band of some four hundred fishermen upon its waters, for it swarms with fish. More than once it has been proposed to drain the swamp, and turn it into arable land fit for growing rice; but I believe the fish which the waters contain are more valuable to

the surrounding country than any amount of rice, as it gives the people variety in their food. On arrival at the margin of the swamp as morning dawned, I found that the boatman who always accompanied me had not arrived, and the only boat available was an ancient forest tree which, when the century was young, had been hollowed out for carrying the present owner's grandfather in his fishing excursions on the lake, and had been preserved as an heir-loom ever since. This kind of canoe, or dug-out, as it is called, is always used on the Monghyr lakes and swamps, for it can easily be steered through tangled grass and reeds where a broad-bottomed boat could not possibly go. But time had so impaired the sea-worthiness of this frail canoe that the water was only kept from entering by lumps of clay, which formed a kind of bulwark against its sides. I had, however, great confidence in the boatman's skill; he had been reared from his childhood in this boat, and knew it well. But the sequel proved my confidence was misplaced; for the boatman made his calculations regarding the tonnage of his boat by the number of natives, and not Europeans, which

it could carry. These Monghyr fishermen are a puny race, averaging eight stone. Although half naked, they look almost as tall as Europeans; and it is not until seen together, standing side by side, that the vast difference in size is perceptible. Thinking, however, that the canoe would carry me safely until a better one arrived, I stepped into it confidently, gun in hand, and helped push out into deep water. We had hardly gone twenty yards when my weight began to tell, and the water burst through the frail clay bulwarks, and the canoe sank to the bottom like a stone. I thought I should be drowned; for on all sides was a tangled mass of weeds which I saw no hope of passing through. I threw aside my gun, and began striking out, when my arm was clutched by the boatman, as I thought, himself a drowning man; but, on turning round, I saw him standing balancing himself on the edge of the boat, which, in sinking, had caught against the stump of a tree below. In a few seconds I was by his side, with a sense of great relief on being saved from a watery grave. Still, our position was far from pleasant, for the swamp abounds with crocodiles fifteen feet long,

always on the look-out for prey. So we shouted at the top of our voices until at last help came, and we were once more landed on the shore. My gun was soon fished up, and I made a fresh start in another boat.

The water, except where it is very deep, is covered with a forest of tall reeds (*Arundo karka*), which give shelter to vast colonies of birds. Here the purple Heron builds its nest, and rises with a wild cry as we draw near. The white, and bronze-winged Jacanas, seeing there is someone strange approaching, raise an alarm, which is re-echoed by a thousand others; and their cry is taken up by the shrill-voiced purple Coots (*Porphyris poliocephalus*), which may be seen in troops, impatiently jerking their tails at our intrusion. There are small green cormorants (*Graculus javanicus*) in scores; but they seem to know that their flesh or feathers are in no demand, and only greet us with a curious stare as we pass within a few yards of where they sit. Myriads of fish are darting about among the dense green foliage below, and a passing boatman holds up a ten-pound carp (*Labio rohita*) which he has just caught, and is anxious to sell me for a shilling.

After punting our way for ten minutes among the reeds, our canoe shoots out into an open lake, where the water is too deep for the reeds to grow; and here is a sight which few naturalists or sportsmen have had the luck to see. Thousands upon thousands of ducks are upon the water, and do not care to rise until the boat comes within easy shot.

But I have had so much duck-shooting lately among the various marshes on my line of march that I prefer lying at the bottom of the boat watching the birds as they collect together, apparently consulting together whether I am to be trusted or not. There are two or three beautiful Pink-headed ducks (*Anas caryophyllacea*), which are very rarely seen in Monghyr. They are sitting amongst a vast army of gadwalls, and evidently fraternising with them. Numerically equal to these are the Red-crested Whistling ducks (*Branta rufina*), whose bills in life exactly resemble the brightest red coral. Then there are Tufted ducks, and Shovellers, and Pochards, and Teal, and the little Goose Teal (*Nettapus coromandelianus*), which may be seen on almost every pool of water in Monghyr. These little familiar birds used to sit

upon my house at Rungpoor, where I was stationed some years ago; and a friend of mine, finding his chimney smoked when he lit a fire in the grate on the first arrival of the cold weather, discovered that there was a Goose Teal's nest in the chimney.

Nor is the only interest above the water. Below the water plants, the butterworts, and water-lilies, form vast caverns and fairy-like palaces, suitable as habitations for crocodiles and fish. But I have come out on this occasion to-day to botanize on Monkey island, and at 9 o'clock a signal gun is fired to announce that all the residents of Monghyr, who are able to come so far, have collected for the annual picnic on the lake, and with a canoe full of water plants, the boatman makes the best of his way to shore.

When the Perpetual Settlement of Bengal was made in 1793, this sacred spot was allowed to remain revenue-free; and a grant of four pounds per annum was made by Government, in order to keep a light burning in the little temple there, and to feed the monkeys which abound. The money was drawn for fifty-seven years regularly; but in 1850 I find that a neighbour-

ing landholder who had quarrelled with the priest, demonstated very clearly that the light had long since been extinguished, and the monkeys were left to forage for themselves in the surrounding jungle. The grant was accordingly withdrawn, and the priests have a grievance which they began to retail directly I landed.

The monkeys, notwithstanding the loss of the funds which should supply their wants, are in great force still; and as we sat at breakfast beneath a spreading silk-cotton tree, they came peeping out on all sides from every bush, thankfully accepting pieces of bread and potatoes freely distributed by the ladies. One old patriarch, who thought he would be very cunning, and set a good example of thieving to the rest, sat perched on a bough above us watching a servant boiling some potatoes, and seeing the man's back turned crept softly down, and like the clown in a pantomine plunged his arm up to the elbow in the seething pot. With a yell of pain he sprang into the air, and amid our shouts of laughter scampered back to his look-out on the tree, where he revenged himself by making the most horrible grimaces

at us during the remaining time we sat at breakfast.

After breakfast we had a long talk with the priest, who says he has never been more than five miles from home. I could get very little out of him regarding the history of the island, for the simple reason that he knew very little about it. The island appears too large to have been formed by the ancient lake-dwellers; and, indeed, when primeval man existed on the earth, this part of the country was probably at the bottom of the sea. The land being covered with badly burnt bricks, cultivation is said to be impossible, and as cannon balls are occasionally found by the priests, the island at no distant period was probably a fort, and the stronghold of lawless tribes.

The monkeys live on very good terms with the priests, and many came from the jungle on being called by them. The High Priest assured me that when a monkey dies, the others bury it; but his only authority for such a statement was that he had never seen a dead monkey, or found any of their bones.

After leaving the temple, we visited two

hermits, who having renounced the world, are passing their days on this lonely island, engaged in penance and in prayer. They have made for themselves what in England would be taken for rudely constructed pigsties, and here they sit cross-legged, with matted hair, and their bodies covered with ashes, muttering prayers. They will not receive money, but eat the scanty fare with which charity supplies them. On asking one of them if he would come out and show himself to our party, he readily consented; but stooping down and peeping into his sty, I saw he was devoid of clothing as our first parents were before the fall, so I hurriedly told him to remain where he was, and that we were sorry to interrupt him in his prayers.

Besides priests and monkeys, numerous fishing eagles, attracted to the spot by the fish in the lake, build their nests here; and a pair of ospreys were soaring overhead as we sat at breakfast, screaming out their dissatisfaction at our intrusion. Their harsh notes, however, were pleasantly contrasted by the sweet notes of a Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*), which sat on a neighbouring bush, and the clear bell-like note of an oriole, which was on the look

out for a mate from the summit of a palm tree near the temple.

Whilst the rest of the party employed themselves by playing hide-and-seek among the bushes, I amused myself by making a careful examination of the plants upon the island. Palms (*Borassus flabelliformis*) abound, but they are never tapped; for the simple people say they would yield blood instead of toddy. This is the only place in the rich alluvial plains north of the Ganges where I have seen the forest trees, the screw-pod sterculia (*Helctereis isora*), the crab cinchona (*Randia dumentorum*), and the red powder berry (*Mallotus phillippenensis*). The bastard ebony (*Diospyros montana*), is common, and its yellow fruit is now quite ripe.

In the hollows where the water lies, the marsh oak-myrtles (*Barringtonia acutangula*) abound; the lower branches are embellished with what at first sight appear like masses of *débris* the size of a man's head. The natives say that they consist of *phen*, or foam, which has frothed up when the flood was at its height. On examination they will be found to be sponges composed of flinty *spicula*, which under the

microscope appear like needles. The natives object to handle them, as the spicula, too small to be distinguished by the naked eye, insinuate themselves into the pores of the skin, and cause considerable irritation.

The name of this species, which may be collected in the Monghyr marshes by millions, is *Spongilla Carteri*, given in honour of Dr. Carter, who has written an interesting account of the fresh-water sponges of Bombay in the "Annals of Natural History." Myriads of gemmules, or eggs, may be seen collected in the sponge, and these are the germs of future sponges. They are set free during the rains, and on finding an unoccupied branch drooping into the water, they seize it and there take root and multiply.

On the island the sweet-scented climbing asparagus (*Asparagus racemosus*) is common; it is now a mass of small white flowers; and near it is the creeping fig (*Ficus repens*), which is not often seen in Monghyr. I caught upon its leaves a splendid specimen of the variable butterfly (*Diadema bolina*), which has a very extended range from India to Peru; and near it was the spotted ant-leopard (*Palpares pardus*),

skulking from the midday sun, and taking a siesta in the shade. This family is very abundant in Monghyr, and the pitfalls made by the larvæ or ant-lions, to entrap unwary insects, are spread all over the country.

But the time when the south-west monsoon is blowing is the best for the entomologist in Monghyr. Myriads of mosquitoes are said to infest this island during the rainy season, so that neither man nor cattle can remain, even the holy men cannot face the torment of insects then, and the island is abandoned to the monkeys which are forced to stay. The priests informed me that the monkeys sit perched at night on the highest branches of the trees facing the monsoon which blows the mosquitoes away.

Woodpeckers are common here; and I found a nest of the golden-backed woodpecker (*Brachypternus aurantius*), containing four white eggs similar to those of the green woodpecker of England.

As evening was drawing in the air became thick with swallows, assembling from all the country round to roost among the reeds. I believe there is no other roosting-place within the two thousand square miles which make up

the northern portion of Monghyr, so that the swallows which come here probably spread daily over this vast tract of country. I attempted to make some sort of calculation regarding the number of swallows which roost on the Kabur reeds, and the number of insects which they require for their food. The number of the insects must be immense, and not far short of a thousand millions daily.

As I was engaged in my calculations, I heard the signal gun announcing that my companions were about to start, and making my way to the bank of the lake found the canoes manned and ready to carry our party to the opposite shore on our homeward route. This was the time for making a bag, for the air was full of ducks going out and swallows coming in. Soon as the procession of boats was formed we started, as the full moon was rising above the reeds under a cloudless sky. Although I felt perfectly satisfied with my spoils collected during the day, my companions were not equally so, and before we reached the land many a poor duck had cause to rue our picnic on the Kabur swamp.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Visit to Syria and Palestine on the way Home from India.—Jaffa.—The House of Simon the Tanner.—American Tourists.—Birds seen in Palestine.—Russian Pilgrims.—Their Faith and Enthusiasm.—The first sight of Jerusalem.—The Mount of Olives.—Distance lends Enchantment to the View.—Filthy state of the City.—Journey to Jericho.—Bad Roads.—Jumping the Brook Chereth.—Bathing in the Dead Sea.—Bathing in the Jordan.—Return to Jericho on our Homeward Route.

On my way home from India with my wife, I happened to have my attention drawn to a map of Palestine; and I remarked what I had never noticed before, that Port Said, at the Mediterranean entrance to the Suez Canal, is, so to speak, little more than a stone's throw from Jerusalem. We previously intended to wander about Italy for some time before going to England, so, as we had plenty

of time at our disposal, we determined to make a *détour* from our homeward route and visit Palestine. Directly our determination was known, several of our fellow-passengers, who appeared as ignorant as we had been regarding the relative positions of Port Said and Jerusalem, declared that they would accompany us; but in a short time, when the enthusiasm of the moment had passed off, the would-be pilgrims, with the exception of an old college friend and his wife, found that either the necessary time or the money could not be spared. So they consoled themselves with the reflection that, after all, the Holy Land was probably not worth visiting; and that it would be very undignified to arrive at Jerusalem in an omnibus, which some one declared to be the usual mode of conveyance from Jaffa.

On arrival at Port Said we found a French steamer ready to start that evening for Constantinople, touching at Jaffa and Beyrout on its way; but, although we were fortunate so far, the Captain told us that the sea was higher than he had known it for years, and he doubted whether we should be able to land at Jaffa,

where there is no sort of harbour; and the rocky shore facing the open roads, renders landing in bad weather difficult, if not impossible.

We left Port Said in the evening, and, early next morning, we sighted Jaffa; but the sea was so high that the Captain refused to anchor, and, much to our regret, we were carried on to Beyrout, in Syria, where we landed next morning, and put up at an hotel kept by a very respectable and obliging Greek gentleman and his daughter, both of whom could speak seven languages fluently, without ever having been to school; and there was I, after years of schooling and toiling at the dead languages, unable to make myself understood in any but my mother-tongue. One feels quite inclined to blush for shame travelling abroad, and to curse the absurd system of education in England, which teaches almost everything but what is really useful.

Previous to the introduction of railways and steamboats, there was not much necessity for teaching the modern languages of Europe; but, now that everyone who can afford to do so travels, the case is altered. My wife, even before

coming of age, had visited nineteen countries; and, as her education fortunately embraced modern languages, she acted as my interpreter during our travels in Europe. Wherever we went I realised that knowledge is power; for, being able to communicate our wants to the natives, we met with an amount of attention and civility which the most intimate knowledge of Latin and Greek fails to produce abroad.

We were followed to the hotel by the Custom-house officers, who, being ushered in by our host, demanded a present for not examining our boxes. A small coin satisfied them; and, although we probably had nothing dutiable with us, they did not make any inquiries, or appear to give themselves any trouble in the matter.

After waiting four days in Beyrout, and making a very pleasant excursion to the foot of Mount Lebanon—

> "Whose head in wintery grandeur towers,
> And whitens with eternal sleet;
> Whilst summer in a vale of flowers
> Is sleeping rosy at his feet,"

a return Messagerie Impériale's steamer arrived, and we re-embarked for Jaffa. This time we were more fortunate than before; and, al-

though the sea was still running high, the steamer anchored, and we were able to land.

It so happened that we found on board the steamer a dragoman named Captain Ali, who, being a resident of Jaffa, undertook to escort us for ten days in Palestine, and show us everything that could be seen in so short a time. We drew up a formal agreement that we were to pay him thirty shillings each per day, or fifty pounds for the ten days; and for this he was to provide us with everything—tents, horses, and food; he was also to pay our expenses at hotels, and all necessary bakshish and black-mail.

Jaffa, or Joppa, is a truly Oriental town, without any attempt at conservancy, crowded with camels, donkeys, blear-eyed men and dogs. The only pleasing things we saw were the oranges, which, in size and sweetness, exceeded anything we had ever seen before.

We made a great mistake in carrying with us a book on Palestine, written by some learned Divine; for his subtle scepticism regarding the authenticity of the sites of the holy places spoilt a good deal of our pleasure. We soon began to regard our guides as liars and rogues,

and felt forcibly the truth of the saying, "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise."

My companions, assured by our Divine that the house of Simon the Tanner does not now exist, would not accept the invitation of a small American boy, whose mother took in washing, to conduct them to the place where Simon is said to have lived, and where lies a huge stone on which Simon is said to have tanned his hides; but I, full of determination to see as much, authentic or not, as I could for my money, accepted the proffered escort gladly. On the road, by way of opening a conversation with my guide, I asked him what he knew about this Simon the Tanner, whose house we were going to visit, "Oh," he replied, "Simon ain't here now, he ain't; he don't live here now; he's dead." "Dead, is he," I said; "pray when did he die?" "Oh," replied my guide, quickly, "he died before mother came here." This was all I could get out of my guide regarding Simon the Tanner.

On my return to the hotel I found our party ready to start. There were fourteen mules drawn up in a row, laden with tents

and baggage. Four horses for ourselves and one for our guide. Our departure was witnessed by a party of American tourists, who were beguiling their time by pitching coppers for a wager into a room on the upper floor of the hotel through an open window. One gentleman appeared to have lost considerably, for I heard his companion remark, "Well, I guess that letter of credit of yours will be pretty well used up before you have finished with that window."

Our way led through orange groves laden with splendid fruit; and over gently-undulating corn fields, enlivened with the song of numerous skylarks; and the air, although it was the month of April, was cool and pleasant. The beautiful Roller (*Corracias garrula*), so rare in England, is common here. We found it everywhere, flying over our heads, generally in one direction, as though migrating. The beautiful Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) was equally common. In the evening, as we sat under a fig-tree, these birds, in flocks, came hawking for flies close to us, uttering their melodious whistle, in no way distinguishable from that of the Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops*

phillippensis) so common in India. We passed a colony building in a sand-pit close to the road, and from which we might have taken any number of eggs.

As Jerusalem is thirty miles from Jaffa, we encamped half way in the evening, and we found that our dragoman had provided very plain, though wholesome, food. Those, however, who love the good things of this life might conveniently, when travelling in Palestine, add to their dragoman's commissariat a few tins of Crosse and Blackwell's provisions, and preserved Swiss milk.

Next morning we started early, and, after crossing a succession of hills, we arrived in the afternoon in sight of the Holy City, which lay spread out like a map before us. Here we dismounted, and sat under a fig-tree for some time to enjoy the view, and allow our tents to get on to the Mount of Olives. With the exception of the Americans at Jaffa, we had met with no tourists; but a large number of Russian pilgrims passed us on their return from the Holy Sepulchre. Most of these persons carried tin cases containing candles lit at the fire produced with "pious fraud" by the

priests on the Day of Pentecost; and these simple Russians carry off the candles in order to anoint the sick and cure diseases in their own country. It is curious, if not humiliating, to contrast the conduct of Englishmen and Russians in the Holy Land. The former, armed with books written by the shining lights of the Church, stand contemptuously looking on, and muttering epithets which sound very much like "humbug," and "bosh," whilst the simple Russians, who can neither read nor write, kneel and reverently kiss every holy place which their guides point out. One cannot help thinking that we see Christians for the first time here, and cease to wonder at the Czar carrying on a crusade on behalf of his fellow-Christians in Turkey, ruling, as he does, so many million "fanatics."

Shortly before sunset we arrived at the Mount of Olives, which, being four thousand feet above the sea, is pleasantly cool, even during the hottest months. Our tents were pitched in a large olive garden, and a flock of mingled sheep and goats, most of them with sweet tinkling bells on their necks, were quietly feeding around, much as their ancestors must

have done on the same spot eighteen hundred years before. Beneath us, on an opposite hill, lay Jerusalem, separated only by a narrow glen, through which the brook Kedron flows. As I sat on my bed, with the tent door open, I could see at one glance all the holy places—the Holy Sepulchre, Mount Calvary, and Mount Moriah, upon which, without doubt, stood Solomon's Temple, but which now is covered with the Moslem mosque of St. Omar. I almost wished afterwards that I had contented myself with this view of Jerusalem, for next day, on entering the city which looks so fair in the distance, we found it full of dirt, squalor, deceit. Every one's soul appeared to be wrapped up in the one absorbing demand for bakshish. It may truly, though sadly, be said of Palestine, if not of other countries, that all but the spirit of man is divine. On every side we were enchanted with the scenery, the hills, valleys, plants, and birds around; but when we held intercourse with the inhabitants, we found little but deceit and sloth, save in demands for bakshish. This irritating word imbibed with the mother's milk, is the first word which the infant learns to lisp. The strong

man and tender maiden have it ever on their lips; and the old man borne down by the weight of age and infirmity, as he sinks into the grave, though powerless for aught else, will generally manage to mutter forth "Bakshish, hajji! bakshish."

The Mosque of St. Omar, formerly closed to Christians, is now opened by a golden key. As it stands on the site of Solomon's Temple it is full of interest, and many of the carved stones defaced with axes and hammers are pointed out as having belonged to the ancient Temple. Here are a couple of pillars, about eighteen inches apart, which the Mahomedans have set up as a measure of excellence. Anyone who can squeeze through is declared to be a good man, a pious man. As the stones are much worn by pilgrims passing through, any but a very fat man can easily get a certificate of character; and even the fat man need not despair, for he is passed on to the black stones close by, where his status in society as an honest gentleman is readily established. These stones are let into the wall on opposite sides of a portico. Anyone who having kissed one stone, can walk blindfolded and kiss the other,

is said to be a very good man indeed. Nor need the pilgrim be disheartened if he fails at first; he is equally well thought of if he succeeds after repeated trials. There is, no doubt, that such childish nonsense does a good deal of harm among the ignorant pilgrims. The scoundrel, the thief, the liar, succeeds in passing these tests set up by the priests, and returns home happy and assured that his conduct is approved by heaven.

After seeing the numerous show-places inside Jerusalem, which, however, our guide-books assured us were not authentic, we visited the quarries beneath the town, from which the stones for the Temple were brought. These are most wonderful, and the marks of the ancient chisels are as fresh as though they were made yesterday. The ground is covered with *débris* and chippings of the stones, beneath which doubtless many curious relics lay concealed. During five minutes digging with my stick, I turned out the broken pieces of a glazed plate, at least as old as the days of Titus.

From the Mount of Olives we could see the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea far away in the distance. Every one visiting Jerusalem

should pay these places a visit also. On the third day after our arrival we sent for the chief of the tribe which inhabits the country we should pass through, and having paid him a guinea as black-mail, we started for Jericho, which stands on an oasis in the surrounding desert, and is watered by the little brook Chereth.

The chief who accompanied us, was the same man who has been reviled by former tourists as an impostor. We, however, understanding oriental character, found him a very honest gentleman, quite capable of passing the pillar or black-stone tests; and although I am quite ready to admit that under the circumstances there was no occasion for his being armed as he was, cap-a-pie, yet without his escort, I have no doubt whatever that we should have been robbed. Taking him with us was like taking a ticket for a railway journey, or for the opera. The rogues *en route* saw that black-mail had been paid, and attacking us would be like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. These tribes have sense enough to see that it is better to take a guinea or so from each of the numerous parties which visit their country

unmolested, than by violence to prevent the visits of pilgrims altogether.

The country between Jerusalem and Jericho is barren in the extreme. We met no one during the journey of eighteen miles, and saw no one save here and there a solitary shepherd tending his flock with a matchlock across his knees.

These flocks of sheep and goats do a great deal of harm to the country. Their perpetual nibbling keeps down the shrubs and trees which would otherwise spring up, attract moisture, and render the country fertile. Under a liberal and enlightened Government, Palestine and Syria would soon become gardens; but under the present wretched system there is no inducement to improve the soil and become rich, for a man of any wealth soon finds himself a subject for extortion and oppression by the Government and its myrmidons.

Palestine is a very interesting country to English and Indian naturalists, as it forms the head-quarters of birds which only occasionally straggle so far east as India, or so far west as the British Isles. Besides Rollers and Bee-eaters, we saw Scavenger vultures (*Neophron*

perenopterus), which are "British birds," though few people are aware of the fact. They are pointed out as eagles to credulous tourists, and are the birds, I presume, alluded to in the last verse of Luke, chapter xvii., "Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

The Golden Oriole, and Hoopoe, are not uncommon; and we found the white-headed Stone-chat (*Saxicola leucomela*), so rare in India, abundant, and breeding in holes among the rocks. On arrival on the banks of the Jordan, remembering the lines in Lalla Rookh,

> "And Jordan, those sweet banks of thine,
> And woods so full of nightingales,"

we listened attentively, but heard no sweeter note than that of the Black-cap. The Ruddy Shieldrake (*Tadorna rutila*), so common in India during the cold weather, and which may be seen tame in the London parks, breeds in the reeds here, for we disturbed a pair which evidently had a nest at no great distance.

The road between Jerusalem and Jericho is so bad, that except in a very few parts it is impossible to move beyond a foot pace, and consequently although we left Jerusalem in the

morning, we did not arrive at Jericho until nearly sunset; and we found our tents pitched on the side of the celebrated fountain, the Diamond of the Desert, which feeds the brook Chereth.

On the road to Jericho I had a dispute with our guide, who was an athletic Syrian, regarding the physical powers of the English; and it ended in a challenge from him to run or jump for any stakes I chose to name from one to twenty pounds. On arriving at the brook Chereth, I saw a capital opportunity for testing my friend's bravado; so selecting a part, about seventeen feet wide, I made him promise to follow me over it if he could. The result was as I anticipated; from the opposite bank high and dry, I had the malicious satisfaction of seeing him jump as fairly into the middle of the stream, as though he had measured the centre with a pair of compasses. The shouts of laughter and noise which greeted the guide's discomfiture were so great, that my wife who was lying down in the tent at some distance, came running out to know what was the matter.

Next morning early we started for a five

mile ride to the Dead Sea. On arriving there an impromptu bathing-machine was put up for the ladies, whilst I, accompanied by an old shaikh, who came with us from Jericho, strolled along the pebbly beach until I found a convenient bathing-place. I had heard of the saline nature of the water, but was not prepared for anything so horrible as it proved to be; for on jumping into the sea the brine made my eyes and mouth—which incautiously I opened—smart as though I had plunged them into a solution of caustic. My splutterings and gestures of disgust afforded unlimited satisfaction to the old shaikh, who in his delight rolled about upon the shore, shouting at the top of his voice, "Aha! Aha! Water no good! No good! No g-o-o-o-d!!" I felt very much inclined to jump out and punch the old gentleman's head; but as he had a sword and double-barrel gun in his hands, I thought I might probably make myself still more ridiculous by getting the worst of the encounter. The Dead Sea, as everyone knows, is so buoyant that it is difficult to sink or swim in it. It is a great mistake to suppose that there is anything repulsive in the appearance of the

water, which is as clear as crystal, and of the most heavenly blue. Standing on its shores, however, may be realized the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet; for not a sound is heard but the ripple of the waves upon the pebbly shore, nor can any living thing or blade of grass be seen far as the eye can reach.

Having dressed ourselves, we rode to the banks of the Jordan, and at the spot where our Saviour was baptized, we bathed again and washed off the deposit left by the Dead Sea water. The stream was too rapid to admit of the ladies bathing, though both could swim, so they employed their time in collecting plants for me, and repelling the fierce attacks of mosquitoes, which are ever on the look out for tourists. Here we had reached our furthest point of travel; so after our bathe, and a quiet siesta in the shade, the setting sun warned us it was time to be off, and mounting our horses we returned to our tents at Jericho, on our homeward route.

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